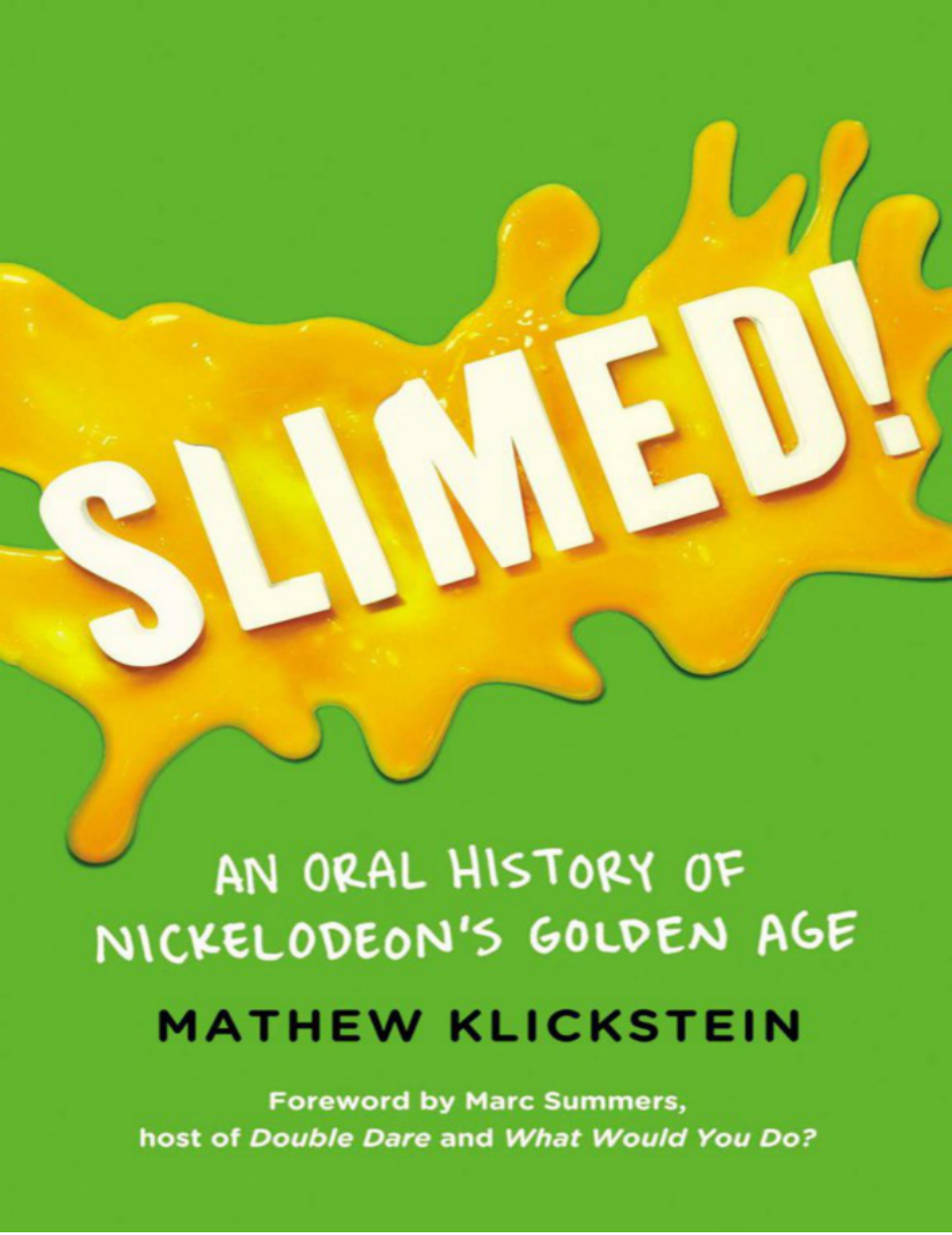
SLIMED!
AN ORAL HISTORY OF
NICKELODEON'S GOLDEN AGE
MATHEW KLICKSTEIN
Foreword by Marc Summers,
host of Double Dare and What Would You Do?

MATHEW KLICKSTEIN is the author of *This Book Is Called Counter*, *Daisy Goes to the Moon*, *Back to Hollywood*, *My Dog Forgot How to Read*, and *Rag Doll*. He wrote Steven Seagal–starrer *Against the Dark* for Sony Pictures, cocreated National Lampoon's *CollegeTown USA*, and directed the feature-length rockumentary *Act Your Age: The Kids of Widney High Story*.

Mr. Klickstein has also written professionally for the live theater as well as numerous news outlets.

He has grave difficulty finding steady employment.

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mathew klickstein

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Michael Shotwell Jr., Stepbrother (1973–2012)
Tony Whitfield, Superhero (1967–2012)
Wendy Kale, Music Critic (1953–2011)

“It’s what I call my Fail-osophy: I start every project as a failure. That way, if it fails, it’s a success. And if it succeeds and is therefore a failure . . . well, then we can party anyway.”

—ORMLY GUMFUDGIN

About the Author

Title Page

Copyright

Dedication

Epigraph

FOREWORD BY MARC SUMMERS

NOTE ON THE TEXT

THE TWEEN:
What was it like to grow up on Nickelodeon?

THE MESS AND IRREVERENCE:
What is green slime *really* made out of?

THE DESIGN, FASHION, AND TECHNOLOGY:
How did they get Nickelodeon to look so . . . Nickelodeon?

THE MUSIC AND SOUND:
What the *hell* is he singing about in the *Pete & Pete* theme song?

THE DIVERSITY:
Why were so many of the people on Nickelodeon white?

THE CHALLENGES:
Why did they kick the creator of *Ren & Stimpy* off his own show?

THE END OF AN ERA:
How has Nickelodeon changed over the years?

SPECIAL MESSAGE FROM ARTIE,
THE STRONGEST MAN IN THE WORLD

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

CAST OF CHARACTERS

INDEX

PHOTOGRAPHS

ON YOUR MARK! GET SET!! STOP!!!

Now that I have your attention, let's talk about one of the most amazing channels ever created. One that pretty much changed the landscape of kids' TV, not to mention my fledgling showbiz career!

My first introduction to Nickelodeon was long before my *Double Dare* audition. It was our night-light, when our babies came home from the hospital and wanted that three-in-the-morning feeding. Cable was young, and we would catch the East Coast feed of a show that looked like something from the fifties: *Pinwheel*. The production, in my opinion, was horrible: the puppets were lackluster, and it seemed they reran the same six shows over and over. Yet I was mesmerized.

Fast-forward the tape to 1986. I was doing many things to feed my family. These included warm-ups on TV shows like *Webster*, *Star Search*, and *What's Happening Now!* . . . and working as a stand-up comic and magician in clubs all over LA. A friend from Indianapolis—a ventriloquist—decided he was ending his performing career, moving behind the camera, and called to tell me about an audition I should attend instead of him. He said the network was Nickelodeon, and it was a kids' game show. Hell, at that point of my life, I would audition for anything. Well, as we all know, it worked out pretty well.

The first day at the studio set the tone for what was about to come down. It was a bunch of young guys who were very bright and creative and yet had little experience in the world of game shows. I was the old man of the group at age thirty-four (although focus groups thought I was in my early twenties), with thirteen years of experience as a game show writer. I had crossed paths with some of the greats, including Bob Barker, Jack Barry, and Ralph Edwards. It really did not matter. We all had a sick sense of humor, were nostalgic for early TV references—and did I mention, we could do pretty much whatever we wanted?

Geraldine Laybourne was running the place and had a great philosophy: Hire people who know what they are doing . . . and then let them do their jobs. I miss her! That is why the joint was successful. We were allowed to be a little off center, think on the spot, and, in my opinion, play up to the audience. We never felt we were doing a kids' show. We compared our humor to *Rocky & Bullwinkle* and *Soupy Sales*. It was kids' TV that parents wanted to watch. It was one of the main reasons *Double Dare* took off.

Our success on *Double Dare* opened the floodgates. All of a sudden, kids had their own game shows, talk shows, variety shows, sitcoms,

and dramas. They were all a bit raw in production values, but the casting was superb, as was the writing. The people on screen spoke like real kids and were not blue-eyed, blond-haired specimens from the perfect world of Disney. The audience could relate to what they saw on the screen. Finally!

Add to this contests that included romps through toy stores; Nick Takes Over Your School; arena tours with *Double Dare*, *What Would You Do?*, and *GUTS* . . . and the best slogan anywhere: "The place where only kids win!" It was to kids of a particular generation the golden age of TV. Now, well into their thirties, these viewers look back fondly on the shows, characters, and music associated with these programs.

Why did it work? Was it the casting? The writing? The irreverence? Was it just timing? What you are about to read might explain it. Personally, I think it is like trying to dissect a joke. Why is it funny? Who cares? It worked, and we are all glad it did. Soooooooo . . .

On your mark! Get set!! Go!!!!

Happy Reading!

MARC SUMMERS
Host, *Double Dare* and *What Would You Do?*

NOTE ON THE TEXT

This oral history of Nickelodeon is created from a series of original, one-on-one interviews conducted by the author. Some quotes have been appropriately modified for purposes of clarity.

CHRISTINE TAYLOR: It was sort of us going through the things a lot of kids do . . . but we were doing it on TV. I can go back and see myself growing up before my very own eyes—for all the world to see.

DANNY TAMBERELLI: It's part of how I became who I am now. I've heard the same thing happened to me said by people who grew up watching the show. It was okay to be weird and be a little bit off and not be completely status quo. It sort of molded me. I still burp and stick things up my nose.

ELIZABETH HESS: Of course, both Melissa Joan Hart and Jason Zimbler were going through huge changes. They went through puberty over the course of *Clarissa*. They both learned how to drive during the course of the shows. Jason's voice changed. Melissa's body went from a girl to a young woman. All those sorts of things.

JUDY GRAFE: Something everybody noticed was when Michael Maronna's voice was changing. We were all like, "What does *that* mean? Is he still going to be Pete?" Then once he was becoming an early teen idol, all the young girls were coming to the sets all atwitter over him. *That's* something we noticed, too.

ALISON FANELLI: Some weeks were horrid because we were going through puberty and I might have this big pimple on my forehead while I'm trying to shoot a close-up. I got to a point where *every* scene they were putting powder on my face, because we were just oily teenagers. After a while, they were more conscious about giving us different dressing spaces instead of trading off in the same space. But mine was near Michael's and Danny's. Oh gosh, yeah. It was super awkward.

VANESSA LINDORES: Growing up isn't easy. Doing it in front of a lot of people doesn't make it any easier.

ALASDAIR GILLIS: This entrance into puberty was being captured on film. For myself, it was kind of jarring.

LARISA OLEYNIK: It's definitely embarrassing when you're literally growing up in front of people's eyes. You're doing wardrobe fittings and it's like, "Oh! I have hips now! I'm not just the beanpole I used to be!" It's awkward, but no more awkward than it would be otherwise.

It would have been more awkward if I had just been going to junior high being like, “What do I do?”

HEIDI LUCAS: There was something female-related that I went through on *Salute Your Shorts*, and I felt completely secure with the female crew that was there. I knew I could take a problem or concern to anyone and they would wrap their arms around me physically and figuratively to help me through any problem.

HERB SCANNELL: Things were, by and large, sympathetic. Most of the kids had family structures they were living in, and our job was to let them continue being kids.

JASON ZIMBLER: Those people helped to raise me. They made me funny. They made me a good person.

ALISON FANELLI: But parts of it *were* really awkward and hard. In the “What We Did on Our Summer Vacation” special, I was eleven or twelve and working in the photo booth costume. It was a yellow T-shirt and a green jumper that was a skirt. Something went wrong with the microphone, they yelled cut, and one of the crew members came over, got down on his knees, and went right for the microphone, which was wrapped around my waist under the dress. My mom came *flying* out of nowhere: “No! No! No!” That was the first time I was conscious to, “Oh, maybe I should be more aware that he was grabbing me!” It was totally professional, but . . .

JESSICA GAYNES: I was the youngest of all of the hosts on *Wild & Crazy Kids*. And I was a *girl*. Sometimes it’s shocking how we’d get one crew person who would be *clueless*. There was one time where they said, “Put them in their spaces.” One of them thought it would be funny to say, “Jessica’s in her *hole*!” I heard it. And everybody who heard it, their jaws dropped. One person said, “What are you doing? She’s a minor! Do you want to get *sued*?” Those incidents are scarring. Young girls can’t handle that.

JUSTIN CAMMY: The crew on *You Can’t Do That on Television* introduced me to pornography. *Playboy* was always lying around.

ADAM WEISSMAN: You’re going through hormonal changes on your own, you’re feeling awkward in your own body, you’re trying to figure yourself out . . . and then you thrust that awkwardness in front of the cameras, in front of people, doing scripted TV, which you may or may not have been trained to do. You have to deal with the pressures of a TV show, and two or three hours a day in short increments, you get pulled off the set to go to school. There’s somebody knocking on the door every twenty minutes, saying, “Okay, it’s time to come back to

the set!"

JUSTIN CAMMY: That is the totally unglamorous nature to making a TV show: The days are long, it's really boring, you're inside an overly air-conditioned studio. Most of the time you're waiting for lights to work or cameras to be set. It's a fun job, but nevertheless a job.

MICHAEL MARONNA: I didn't think of it so much as a career. I had my individual pursuits—was into my Nintendo, playing outside . . .

LARISA OLEYNIK: I was able to maintain a relatively normal life. We all just got up, went to work, and then did our homework. Then went to bed. And socialized like normal human beings on the weekend.

JOANNA GARCIA: My parents were okay with me doing *Are You Afraid of the Dark?* because it was conducive to being normal and staying in school in Florida, then going up for a couple weeks to shoot in Montreal. I got the best of both worlds.

JACOB TIERNEY: Those of us in the Midnight Society weren't in the stories; we just kinda burned our little bits and played with the fire. They taped all of our stuff at the beginning of each season.

D.J. MACHALE: That was a challenge, because it meant all the stories had to be set up very early on because we couldn't do a campfire scene where the kids would say, "This is a story about a really scary . . . *thing*."

JACOB TIERNEY: We did it—the campfire stuff—so quickly. If memory serves, we'd do a whole season maybe within two weeks. Maybe four of them a day, and then we were done. It's kind of a black hole in my memory.

JUDY GRAFE: Danny's mother made him understand that this was a temporary thing and that a lot of times what happens when kids who are actors grow up is that they find there's nothing there for them.

DANNY TAMBERELLI: My parents were really good at keeping me grounded. I worked at a bagel store while working on *All That*. I played rec soccer and baseball during all the shooting of *Pete & Pete*. They made sure to work really hard so I wouldn't have a Michael Jackson upbringing or anything.

DANNY COOKSEY: It's an interesting thing that happens when you're successful and young; it changes everything. I was around a lot of people who were sort of affected by it, and it's a weird chip that people carry around. You can either take the negative around with you or take the positive. Nobody comes out unscathed.

MELISSA JOAN HART: I was working too hard to get into trouble. I wasn't in Hollywood; I was in Orlando, and other than the two boys on *Clarissa*, I was the only one around my age. All the people around were like big brothers and sisters keeping an eye on me, telling me what's right and wrong. I didn't have to go drinking or do drugs or go to clubs or any of that, because I was having such fun being a part of this whole thing.

SEAN O'NEAL: When kids are in the spotlight and they are not given room to breathe and they are sucked into the vortex of what this industry can do to certain people, that's a shame. I went through some transitional periods afterward that took a long time to really get me solid. But man, the show was an amazing experience.

ADAM REID: It wasn't a big deal in Ottawa. None of my friends cared that I was doing *You Can't Do That on Television*. Several times I would do these trips—Vanessa, Doug, Les, and I went and rolled Easter eggs on the White House lawn; we met George Bush!—and then we'd go back to school like nothing happened.

BLAKE SENNETT: Any time you bounce back and forth, it's weird. You're the king of the universe and then you go back to school and you have no friends and you're "that nerdy theater kid." I felt like a dork in high school. But it was worth it.

ALISON FANELLI: I got teased a bunch in elementary school. In high school, they knew that I was gone for four months of the school year and then I'd be back. The teachers were even used to it. I had a really tight-knit group of friends who knew what I was doing. When I was off set, I was Ally. I got to be me: go to school, go to homecoming dances, and play the oboe, and sing in the theater show. Growing up, no matter how big a show is—and we didn't think *Pete & Pete* was all that popular at the time—you just gotta be careful of the friends you pick. I could tell which people wanted to ask about the show and hang out just because I was on a show, as opposed to my friends. That's a good life lesson.

HEIDI LUCAS: When life went back to normal, and the show went on syndication, I found a world of conflict. I had so much praise and support from my family. My true friends thought it was the greatest thing in the world. But then I would go to school . . . I could not escape enough. I had to have lunch in a teacher's homeroom with a teacher because it was the safest place for me to go. Everybody wanted to beat me up. I had "kick your ass" threats all over my locker; I had "Heidi ho" written on my locker. It got so bad I was pulled out and was homeschooled for my last year and a half. That's how bad it

was.

MEGAN BERWICK: A lot of kids who act go through the same thing where everybody hates you. The other thing is that you're not in school enough in a year that you can actually be a part of any of the cliques. One of the things that struck me about junior high was how many lunch breaks I'd spend sitting in the bathroom alone. It wasn't until college that I realized I was actually pretty and could date and all that stuff. I definitely *never* got asked out in high school. Not a single time.

TREVOR EYSTER: I certainly would never have thought Megan would have had that trouble. Sure, she had braces, but she was bright, amazingly intelligent, quirky, charming.

DANNY TAMBERELLI: For me, it was typical, normal growing up. People made fun of people for different things. I made it out all right. I got a lot of kids on to the show because I lived in Jersey where we shot, so if they needed kid extras, I would invite people to come. That helped me make friends.

CHRISTINE TAYLOR: The pilot was going to just be this fun thing I never thought would go any further. When we went off to do it, it sort of felt like a dream. I was really new to it at the time. The day we were going to fly to Arizona for *Hey Dude* was the day they were announcing homecoming in my school, and that was a big deal. I still went to school in the morning before we drove to JFK Airport to get on the flight. I was still really invested in my "real" life, as I called it.

DAVE RHODEN: My parents would pick me up right from high school, drive me to the studios, and we'd be there until eight fifteen or eight thirty at night. Get home around nine to eat dinner and then try to crank out homework until around ten. On top of that, we had lines to memorize. Some teachers wouldn't always collect our homework, but we would be told to do it anyway. So I would literally guess each night which homework assignments would be picked up the next day in class and work on those ones.

CHRISTINE MCGLADE: I wouldn't say my grades suffered at all. But I was involved with gymnastics at the time I started *You Can't Do That on Television* and had to drop that activity. It might seem like an obvious choice, but it was a difficult one for me because I really enjoyed gymnastics.

ROGER PRICE: None of the *You Can't Do That on Television* kids were encouraged to leave school. Most of them kept up with their schoolwork. There was a limit on the hours they might work.

ALISON FANELLI: My tutors on set were always very supportive of my academic career. Even if I were to have continued with acting or directing, they still would've encouraged me to go to college.

DAVE RHODEN: Part of Saturday we would be tutored because we were missing a Monday of school every week. Imagine a bunch of rebellious teenagers in a little trailer with one lady at a time who would be tutoring us on multiple subjects. There was one lady they brought in to teach us foreign language. She'd work with Jocelyn Steiner on Latin, she'd work with me on Spanish, and she'd work with either Chris Lobban or Rick Galloway on French. On top of that, she was deaf.

JASON ZIMBLER: She was an unbelievably impressive woman. Melissa Joan Hart was taking Spanish and I was taking French with her. Both Melissa and I became friends not only with her but with her family. Dave Martel from *Pete & Pete* is her nephew.

DAVE MARTEL: My aunt's an amazing woman and has a great way with languages. She could see by reading people's lips how they were pronouncing the words.

DAVE RHODEN: So now let's focus on the fact that she was deaf. She's one-on-one with somebody, reading their lips, and her back is to somebody else. We would say the raunchiest stuff behind her back and make the weirdest faces we could make just to make the other person bust up.

DAVE MARTEL: She would always tell me these stories of kids on set, and it sounded like they were having so much fun. She gave me the acting bug.

DAVE RHODEN: She couldn't hear anything. Again, it was horrible. But that was a funny little thing that we'd do. Sorry.

DAVE MARTEL: She was not completely deaf. She's just a little hearing-impaired. She wears a hearing aid. That's a shame that people would take advantage. I don't imagine she was aware of that.

KEVIN KUBUSHESKIE: There was some teasing and bullying when I was younger, but mostly friends and family were indifferent. As were most Canadians.

CHRISTINE MCGLADE: Canadians are funny. When people here are successful, they often go to the States because they don't get support at home. Sometimes we'd get a jealous reaction from kids in the city, but I didn't get any of that from my close friends I associated with. They just thought it was a funny, strange thing that they didn't give a

lot of weight to.

ROSS HULL: For me, I probably got more recognition for doing *Are You Afraid of the Dark? after* we were done than when we were actually shooting it.

BRENDA MASON: The kids would be *amazed* when they came into the station and would find bags and bags of fan letters from the U.S.

ALASDAIR GILLIS: As a fourteen-year-old, I don't know if I knew what to make of that. In some ways, I thought it would be more interesting to be in the States and sort of revel in that attention. Not that I think that's of great value now. But as a kid, there's an appeal to having some of the affirmation about the show's success, whereas here in Canada, I was just as likely to get picked on or made fun of by older kids: "Oh, you're on that stupid show."

ROGER PRICE: When they flew down to the States, they were sometimes mobbed. The Americans are a demonstrative people, like the Brits. But Canada is a whole country of Minnesotans.

ABBY HAGYARD: Alasdair was horribly self-conscious after that. It took him a while to get over that. That really blindsided him.

ADAM REID: It was easier back then. We didn't have the "kid actor" system that there is today. There weren't ten agents and whatever for every actor . . . We had kids who were interested in expressing themselves and had a lot to express. We didn't have kids who were doing things because their parents thought they should.

MICHAEL BOWER: Timothy [aka Trevor] Eyster's mother was like a stage mom, and that was pretty tough. "My kid this, my kid that . . ." Oh God, it was *annoying*! His mother ran his life.

MEGAN BERWICK: His mom was really difficult. Really mean.

TREVOR EYSTER: I don't mean to sound cold, but I'm certainly not concerned about my mother's reputation.

DONNIE JEFFCOAT: Omar Gooding's mom was always on set and was very much a big part of his career back then. It was nice to have her there, because my parents weren't really around and she did take care of us quite a few times!

MICHAEL BOWER: There were a lot of mothers on the set, but all of them kind of became part of it. Venus DeMilo's mother was a manager and ended up managing one or two of the other actors, getting them parts and cameos in other shows. Megan's mother ended up becoming the

set photographer because she had a really nice camera and was taking photos of the cast and crew.

TREVOR EYSTER: I thought Danny Cooksey's mom was cool, because I was envious of the relationship he had with her. I really, really liked Venus's mom a great deal. The few times I met Bower's father, I thought he was a gracious man.

FRED KELLER: Christine Taylor's mom was a stage mother and insisted that she tow the line. Her mom was very chatty, very polite, very nice, but very much watching over Christine. More so than the other kids' parents were.

SEAN O'NEAL: My mom was pretty much my chauffeur. She got me where I needed to be for years. She was always involved in the business and with my coworkers.

GEOFFREY DARBY: Melissa Joan Hart's mom was difficult. She was. I only dealt with it when Mitchell Kriegman needed another bad guy to step in.

JOE O'CONNOR: Melissa loved her mom, but her mom's a show mom.

DAVE RHODEN: My mom's an exceptional person. But a little different, I guess you could say. They had called to invite me back to season three—this was told to me by my dad—and at the time I guess my mom thought I was getting a little too big for my britches. My mom's also borderline bipolar. Very emotional roller coaster–type person. She'd gotten a call one day from Nickelodeon: "Hey, we want to talk with you about Dave's contract for season three." And she answered the phone and just went off and was like, "I DON'T CARE IF HE *EVER* COMES BACK TO NICKELODEON!" Screaming at the top of her lungs and slamming the phone down. That was the end of the negotiations.

VANESSA LINDORES: Roger would not have tolerated stage parents. That would have driven him nuts. I'm sure if there were any, they got nipped in the bud very quickly.

ROGER PRICE: When we started looking for new kids, we always arranged it so that at the final call the parents were entertained with refreshments in the boardroom by some of the kids who were already on the show. Ostensibly, this was so the new parents could ask any questions they wanted to of the established kids. In fact, it was so the kids already on the show could screen the new parents. Even the best kid in the world would have been passed over if their parents had lamentably failed their part of the audition.

GEOFFREY DARBY: A lot of kids wanted to be on *You Can't Do That on*

Television. It wasn't particularly difficult to find them. We had one diva parent who thought her kid was a star. And that kid was fired.

ROGER PRICE: I did not much care what parents thought. Their job was to be good, supportive parents to their kids. My job was to make TV shows. Kids were not allowed to take scripts home. Kids do not talk to parents much anyway.

ADAM REID: That was one thing Roger insisted on: We were never to read over the sketches with our parents. It wasn't that the scripts were secretive. He just didn't want anyone to influence what was actually happening.

VANESSA LINDORES: I don't remember my parents ever being in the studio. They dropped me off and picked me up. That was it. Later, I took the bus to work. Funny, now that I think about it.

MARJORIE SILCOFF: Our parents weren't allowed on the set. Today, AFTRA *requires* a parent or parental figure for *each kid* to be on set. There was something about that that gave my mother pause.

BRENDA MASON: It was a huge leap of faith, considering the bizarre things the kids were required to do.

ALASDAIR GILLIS: Most of our parents, in retrospect, seemed relatively comfortable with us doing it. If they had any doubts or concerns, it wasn't really brought up. It *wouldn't* have been brought up with us. We were eleven, twelve, thirteen . . .

ABBY HAGYARD: Roger made sure there was *always* a female chaperone on set. She was a trained therapist and a lovely woman. She happened to be the mother of two of the boys who had already gotten cast on the show. And if Les Lye wasn't around, I was around. We had the makeup woman, Carole Hay, Geoff Darby . . . There was no situation —to my knowledge—where the kids might have been taken advantage of.

ADAM REID: I had one sketch that dug at me. It was Mom and me on the back porch, and I said, "Mom, there's no way I'm going to school wearing this shirt. This shirt makes me look like a girl." And I take off the shirt. "What are you doing, Adam?" "And these pants! They're too tight, and there's no way I'm going to go to school in these pants." So I'm standing basically in my underwear, and she says, "Adam, you can't go to school with nothing on." "Fine. I can't go to school." And I go inside, shut the door, and lock her out. But to strip down to your underwear as a prepubescent boy—and doing it four, five times . . . Everyone's very respectful and it's a kids' show and everyone's having

fun, but there's still a part of me . . . I felt pretty vulnerable. Brenda Mason came up to me afterward and put her arm around me and said, "That was really good. Are you okay?" And I was sucking back tears: "Yeah, I'm okay, I'm okay." "You did a great job, buddy." It felt like a bit of an initiation. If you watch the sketch, you'd have no idea that I'm actually kind of upset or embarrassed.

MARJORIE SILCOFF: We were all kids, but I know myself to be an above-average sensitive person and the thought of being ridiculed really horrified me.

BOB BLACK: Marjorie was a relative outsider amongst the kids. I would say Marjorie was more on the edge than in the middle. In any group of kids, you're going to have someone who's more in the center of the social action and others who aren't.

JESSICA GAYNES: Omar Gooding would sometimes turn and walk away from me because his mother had said at the start of the season, "Don't make her upset! She has a job to do, and she is sensitive!"

ALASDAIR GILLIS: Dressing up like a girl or being half-naked or stuff like that? At fifteen, these are not the things I want to stand out for! It was enough to make things uncomfortable. Especially the older I got.

JOSH MORRIS: Roger loved seeing little boys in dresses. He thought that was *hilarious*. But the boys didn't like it so much. He'd pick the boy who least wanted to be in a dress and make him wear it.

ADAM REID: Five or six of us went down to LA with Roger as kind of a field trip. Roger found out Doug and Matthew had gotten in a fight—it was just Doug being Doug, a bit of a bully—and instead of punishing Doug, Roger said, "Let's go to a women's department store." We all walked in, and Roger said, "Doug, pick your dress. Matthew, pick your dress." And they spent the rest of the afternoon in dresses as a joint punishment. Through that, Matthew and Doug bonded to an extent. They made it through the rest of the trip together . . . and got along.

ALASDAIR GILLIS: It was probably '84, '85. It was nothing serious. I wasn't really involved. *I* wouldn't have worn a dress.

ROGER PRICE: People do horrible things to kids and make them wear dresses in real life, too. I went to a German school for boys in Switzerland. It was a nice school. Our *dienstmutti* or "service duty mom" used to tell us what to wear, brush our hair, bathe us, scrub us three times a day in a tub, make sure we did our homework, and pull down our pants and smack our butts occasionally. She kept a dress, a sort of hideous Heidi outfit for bad boys to wear. If she was displeased

with you, you found it on your bed. I found it on my bed a couple of times, but I never wore it. You always promised to be good in the future and she always relented.

BOB BLACK: Roger's worldview is that kids and old people are the two most discriminated against. That's *very* Roger.

ALISON FANELLI: What shocked my parents most was when I decided to stop doing it and go to medical school. They expected me to go, be there for three weeks, freak out, and go back to liberal arts. It was harder on them for me to make the change to become a doctor than it was for me to go into show business. What parents say that *now*?

MICHAEL MARONNA: I'm so grateful—when I see kid actors having stage moms—that my parents didn't try to force me into it.

MICHELLE TRACHTENBERG: That's the difference between having stage parents—not actually having the choice to be on set—and people like me, who absolutely *loved* it. I would hate going back to school, because I would always want to be back on set. If anything, I would be *too* excited to be there and would have to remember to calm down. And to not drink so much cream soda.

DAVID JOHANSEN: They were good kids on *Pete & Pete*. Not like your typical asshole kid stars. It was very refreshing.

HARDY RAWLS: Danny and Michael were incredibly smart kids and knew their scripts. They had to be just as professional as the adults but also kids on camera, whereas, as an adult actor, I acted like a big kid and got paid for it.

TOBY HUSS: They seemed like "little Vikings," those guys. That's how I made that phrase up, actually.

ELIZABETH HESS: Melissa may punch me in the eye for telling this story, but it is kind of adorable. There was a period of time in the nineties when bustiers were all of a sudden a big deal. Melissa wanted one, and for her fourteenth or fifteenth birthday party, I went to this junior shop and found this cute little bustier. She opened her present from me and she screamed. She was thrilled and shocked all at the same time! She wanted to kiss me and kill me at the same time. She was so embarrassed and so excited. I think they actually created a story line from it.

ALAN GOODMAN: You know, in one stretch, we did twenty-two episodes, and I think Melissa asked me for three line changes. That's it.

MITCHELL KRIEGMAN: Whenever you're working on any show with a

central character, you start to do everything you can to make sure the character fits the actor like a glove. So I started writing around Melissa and would put in things she would actually say and do to make Clarissa even more like her.

LISA LEDERER: Mitchell used to describe Clarissa as someone he admired. As a woman, I was grateful for that. Yes, Melissa is near and dear to our hearts as well, but her character actually became a living person to us, and we all felt a responsibility to continue representing her as Mitchell's original idea. She was a savvy girl, and we liked that about her.

LISA MELAMED: I knew Christine Taylor liked to sing, so I wrote an episode where her character would sing. I knew Joe Torres was an artist, so I did an episode where I had him draw. Stuff like that always makes the show better because it brings something really authentic to the actors.

CHRISTINE TAYLOR: That was sort of fun to see an episode being about something that was an interest to us.

MARJORIE SILCOFF: There was a very sadistic element on the *You Can't Do That on Television* set, okay? If they knew you had a weakness, they would *pounce* on it. You did not tell them what the kids said about you or if your family had a nickname for you. What a lesson for an eleven- to fourteen-year-old! I'm lucky to say, they didn't find any of mine at the time.

ALASDAIR GILLIS: There are some things I might question in retrospect—fat jokes about Lisa, and a certain amount that was probably over my head at the time in terms of what was tactful or funny. Probably not always the healthiest thing for kids.

BOB BLACK: The fat jokes didn't make sense with Christine McGlade, because she was *tiny*. It was like, "What the heck?" And Lisa was not a stick, but still . . . There's just too much that's happened in the world in connection with teenage girls being afraid of being fat, and I don't think we need to add to that.

KIRK BAILY: I did feel at one point, "Donkeylips is going to have another name we refer to him by, right?" As the counselor, they made fun of me—not for weight but for cluelessness. But Ug was an *adult*.

MICHAEL BOWER: When you're that young, you don't realize you're being made fun of, in a sense. In that moment, it didn't really bother me.

STEVE SLAVKIN: I wanted *kids*, and I wanted them to be as natural as they could be. I didn't want them with a lot of makeup or combed

hair. I wanted to see them fumbling; I wanted the lisp and the stutter and the weirdness. You embrace them for their kid-ness. Michael Bower just did it. There was no concern that would mess him up or that the other kids would make fun of him.

HEIDI LUCAS: In the episode where Donkeylips had a crush on Dina, we were supposed to go to this dance together—the invitation was originally supposed to go to the character of Michael. There's this scene where the girls are in their cabin and Telly and ZZ are basically telling my character that I *have* to go to this thing even though I really don't want to. And I said something mean about his hair or his breath or what he was wearing . . . and in real life, it hit me: *I don't know this person*. That's not what I would have done in real life. You don't make judgment calls like that. I wasn't certain my opinion was the right one, though, and I was thinking at the time that we were getting paid to perform the script that people were getting paid to write.

STEVE SLAVKIN: Michael Bower's a really nice guy, and he's a really talented actor. He actually sort of brought the character of Donkeylips to life. Kids get bad nicknames in their lives. I think this was one of the first times on TV when a weight-challenged child got a mean nickname. And a kid watching this would go, "This is real. We know kids like this." Or, "That's *me* and I can identify with that." *Salute Your Shorts* wasn't some sugarcoated Saturday morning sitcom.

HEIDI LUCAS: The problem with that is at the end of the day, he has to go home looking like Donkeylips. And that's a problem I didn't realize until way later. I could have said something to make him feel better, but I didn't have the mental capacities to, because I was twelve.

TREVOR EYSTER: I did feel bad for him in many ways—and looking back now, worse—because he was being made fun of in a way that was not something he could change.

MICHAEL BOWER: Now I want to get in better shape for my health, but when I was younger, I thought if I got skinnier, I would lose the extra income from acting. Since I was paying the bills and really supporting my family, I was nervous about it.

MEGAN BERWICK: He takes care of his brother and dad. He was the person who pulled through for his family and had these responsibilities since the time he was *really* young. When I was eight or nine, I had an agent who told me I either needed to lose five or ten pounds to be the lead girl or gain twenty pounds to be the fat character actor. They say that kind of thing to *all* kids.

KENAN THOMPSON: Shit like that, I wasn't really paying attention. I was

cool being me, because I was having fun. I knew I didn't fit certain free shirts we would get, but I was like, "Just give me a bigger size or I won't wear this shit." It wasn't like I was going to places and they were turning me down because of how I looked. If *that* was happening, then I probably would have changed certain things. It was more about the people who cared about me wanting me to take care of myself. But I was chillin'. What can I say? I like hamburgers.

TREVOR EYSTER: At the time, Bower's defense mechanism maybe was a rough exterior. I was the "brainiac" sharing a dressing room with him, and one day he came out and said, "I just took the biggest shit of my life! I swear to God, it was *this* size!" Ewww! Gross! To a geek, it was something I just absolutely couldn't relate to. I tried to politely laugh.

DANNY COOKSEY: Michael Bower didn't have to make a joke, because he was there and he would go for it. He was like Chris Farley.

MEGAN BERWICK: There was this girl on set, one of the extras. And she was really pretty. And snobby, too. Michael goes up to her and says, "I thought you were really, really pretty . . . until I got to know you." You can't tell a girl that! But that's just the way he was.

MICHAEL BOWER: They enjoyed me, but I don't think they got my humor, because I was sort of a weird, fat kid. Tim Eyster and me, we had contradicting egos. Now that I know he was a homosexual . . . I got that vibe back then. I was eighteen, nineteen, and knew something was different. But he was very talkative and techie and . . . very *Jewish*. He was analyzing *everything*. And I'm one of those free spirits: "Just let it happen." That was a conflict, sharing a room with him.

TREVOR EYSTER: I felt very ostracized. For me, going through that geeky, nerdy, awkward prepubescent phase happened in front of the camera. Whether in high school or on set, I was this lanky—well, *lanky* would imply *tall*, and I wasn't even tall—awkward-bowl-haircut mama's boy with glasses that had a kinda high voice.

HEIDI LUCAS: I don't want to say I was Tim's protector, because by no means did I go out of my way to protect him . . . but I felt like a big sister. Almost. He made me smile in a very innocent way. If he tried a joke and it didn't work, who cares? It's just Tim.

MEGAN BERWICK: Tim drove me *insane*. He was used to being the youngest, and I was younger than him, so there was all this funny competiveness between us. But at the same time, he just *annoyed* me. Like a little brother annoys you. Arghh! I didn't hang out with him. I hung out with all the other kids. I mean, he's a really nice guy, but . . .

VENUS DEMILO: Tim was hyperactive and he was the youngest person in a group of kids. He was still part of the group. We all liked each other. But we might have picked on him more. He was kinda nerdy.

TREVOR EYSTER: It was really tough. What complicated it for me was that I was going through a sexual identity crisis. I'm probably the only cast member who doesn't qualify as straight. Turns out Danny Cooksey was cordial when he needed to be, but we're in the bathroom and I hear them talking about thinking I'm a "fag," you know? Later on, it turned out I met a girl who knocked my socks off, and I realized I didn't bat for the *other* team 100 percent either. Which was a whole different realization much later.

RICK GALLOWAY: Things were a little cliquey on *Welcome Freshmen*. Chris Lobban and Dave Rhoden got along real well. Jill Setter and Jocelyn Steiner got along really well. So that left me as kind of the oddball of the group.

DAVE RHODEN: Dude, I was a *total dick* to Rick Galloway. I owe that guy so many apologies. I was probably trying to overcompensate for being a nerd, and Rick was a dude that we always picked on. The worst thing I ever did was we were in our little break room and we were eating dinner one night and Jill Setter was talking about how her school was doing an adopt-a-whale program and I turned to Rick and said, "How does it feel?" Because Rick was a little chunky back then. And he got up and cried; he left. I didn't know . . . that Rick had been *adopted*.

BOB MITTENTHAL: Rick was a handful. He was attention-starved because he was homeschooled and didn't get to be around a lot of kids all of the time. As a result, being on set was paradise for him. There were all these people around to talk to and he just loved it. As a result, he could be pretty unfocused and needy at times.

RICK GALLOWAY: I love Bob Mittenthal. He was always very sweet, very nice, even when things got very crazy. Or seemingly.

DAVE RHODEN: Bob and I had a great relationship, and in fact, at one point he came to me and was like, "Hey, I noticed you're not doing all those one-liners and zingers on Rick anymore. Is something wrong?" I was like, "Nah, my mom told me I shouldn't be doing that anymore." And he was like, "Oh man, that's too bad. I thought that was hilarious."

BLAKE SENNETT: When I first started, I wanted the others to think I was cool and not bad as an actor. My character was cocky and charming, and I wanted to be that. In the first episode I was in, I had to hurl a

baseball with incredible velocity and accuracy so it could sail into home and get the guy out. I had to do that! I can't throw a ball that incredibly far! I'm not an athlete. I was worried they would think I was an idiot.

SHAWN DAYWALT-LUTZ: Early on in *Roundhouse*, I was playing the mom, and it just stuck. Buddy Sheffield continued to develop it, but I'd like to think my inflection and my delivery had something to do with it.

BUDDY SHEFFIELD: The mom was just a compilation of every TV mom. The things she was concerned about were what every other TV mom was concerned about. And the dad was a self-contained dad. That's why I put him in the roll-around chair with the TV and BBQ and everything attached right to it.

JOHN CRANE: I played a number of characters, but one was the dad who was this big, bombastic idiot. I grew up watching *All in the Family*, and I always thought my character was kind of clueless like Archie Bunker. Blue-collar, too. One of Buddy's things was that the dad would always say, "Pull my finger!" He wasn't exactly the classiest guy around. Especially when the chair came around . . .

CRYSTAL LEWIS: The chair was definitely like a cast member! Sometimes it seemed to have a mind all its own. It cracked me up that it would have new additions every week, regularly being transformed to fit sketches and episodes. We weren't really encouraged to climb on it. Also, it might run you over if you weren't paying attention.

DAVID SIDONI: The first week, it was just a fight: *Everyone* wanted to play on that thing.

SHAWN DAYWALT-LUTZ: John Crane had tricks with that thing. He could make it go fast and spin it around and stuff. It was really difficult to maneuver, but I never worried he was going to run into me. No one else could be trusted with it, though.

JOHN CRANE: I was playing the dad on the show because I was about ten years older than the rest of the cast. Micki Duran was seventeen when we did the show, and I was thirty. The rest of the guys and girls were twenty-one, twenty-two. I was married. I had kids. If I hung out or went for a drink after the show, it was usually with Rita, Buddy, and Benny.

SHAWN DAYWALT-LUTZ: The role you play in a show makes its way into your relationships. And everyone played my kid. Even though I wasn't old enough to be anybody's mom on the show, I did feel somewhat maternal about everyone. I still do.

DANNY TAMBERELLI: I don't really know where I stopped being myself and started being Pete. Or the other way around.

TREVOR EYSTER: Sometimes it's, "Oh, sorry I called you Sponge!" It might be a new friend who's a fan. I really don't care, because I felt very, very married to that character. Sponge and I are one. I've been both heralded and harshly criticized for that.

VENUS DEMILO: I've always participated in dance and cheerleading. I'm an active girl. So my character fit. It did definitely resonate with me.

ALASDAIR GILLIS: I was essentially playing myself. It was a strange mix. Even just Roger's choice of us using our real names created for me a bit of uncertainty: "Am I supposed to be me? Or a character?"

BLAKE SENNETT: It's hard to remember what's real and what's part of the show.

VANESSA LINDORES: Pretty much played ourselves. Don't recall being confused.

OMAR GOODING: I was definitely playing myself: an excited kid doing what he loves!

RICK GALLOWAY: I always had problems with the way people viewed me as my character. It was this feeling that people thought I was this stupid actor.

ALASDAIR GILLIS: Kevin Kubusheskie is another character who was kind of a dopey dimwit that wasn't him. It was an exaggerated aspect of Kevin being kind of laid-back, kind of foreshadowing the "teen slacker." But he wasn't that.

ROGER PRICE: No one in real life is as dumb as these kids sometimes appeared to be. And they were selected for their high intelligence. We exaggerated their existing character traits quite a lot. Otherwise, they were themselves.

MICHAEL BOWER: I was a character on a Nickelodeon show named *Donkeylips*. There was no "development" on that, really. Every role you see on TV—unless it's an older, really good actor playing it—is always 70 percent that person at that point in their life with the other 30 percent being from acting class or something. With me, they had one fat dude. They weren't going to say, "Come in for Ug." That ain't gonna work. Even the casting director was like, "Oh. You're here for Donkeylips."

KIRK BAILY: It was a combo of what was on the page and what me and

Slavkin and some of the early directors fashioned over time. I grew up in a family of four brothers, and the TV shows in the house were *Three Stooges* and *Abbott and Costello*. I was exposed to that style really early on. I also did a lot of training in New York City. Movement classes. And I went to Boy Scout camp for six or seven years straight with counselors who definitely had the attitude of, "Get it right or pay the price!"

ARON TAGER: That's the secret of playing comedy and playing scary: You *believe* that what you're saying is important to you. You don't have to put on a Bela Lugosi voice. You don't have to do a Boris Karloff. In fact, all the best scary actors never did anything but play it straight. With the right music and if the director leaves you alone, everything is fine.

D.J. MACHALE: That's Horror 101. In most horror movies, they'll have that little bit of lightness to it to kind of laugh and wink at it. Going to "the funny" is a natural tension reliever, because all the stories are so hyped anyway.

RICHARD M. DUMONT: Ron Oliver let me have the last line in "The Tale of the Super Specs" when the spirit tries to get the three of us. I jumped under the table and said, "Take the children!" That was just an ad-lib, but Ron and D.J. MacHale were both like, "Yes, yes, yes! You've got to put that in!"

RON OLIVER: Of course, when he came back up, his face was all red and puffy because of the dry ice machine blowing at him. It was kind of horrible.

RICHARD M. DUMONT: "The Tale of the Super Specs" was, I think, the first episode with my character, Sardo, and was when he said, "That's Sar-*do*! No 'mister'—accent on the 'doh!'" It was always in the script. It was a wonderful, wonderful bit that came, as best I know, from the wonderful mind of D.J. MacHale.

SARAH CONDON: It's very different casting kids than adults. They really have to have the essence of the character in them.

HEIDI LUCAS: I did not specifically work with anyone on the set for character development. Thankfully—and ironically—being a brat was something that just came easily for me.

MEGAN BERWICK: The first day of filming, Heidi brought in three racks of her own clothing because she wanted to make sure she looked beautiful. I was like, "Wow!" One of the nice things was that I got a little cooler working with cool girls who taught me how to dress

better.

HEIDI LUCAS: That doesn't make any sense. That I brought additional clothes to the set? That's not my recollection *at all*! Keep in mind, I had just moved from Illinois to Hollywood. I literally packed two suitcases. So I didn't have a lot of clothes to bring.

VENUS DEMILO: We all definitely shared qualities with our characters.

KIRK BAILY: Heidi wasn't stuck-up. Not at all.

MICHAEL BOWER: Heidi's like her character. To this day, she's in her own world. It has to be her way.

HEIDI LUCAS: I promise this is not just me wanting to have the world think I'm not a brat, but there's not a lot to me that was in Dina.

STEVE SLAVKIN: Heidi was smart, funny, and extraordinarily talented. She was a great actor and a total pleasure to have around. Whatever we wrote for her, she made it better. All of the kids had a little bit of their character in them, and that's what made them so interesting and real.

TREVOR EYSTER: Steve is a very diplomatic guy, but I would have to confirm that everyone was very much their character.

MARJORIE SILCOFF: They loved having kids with braces, and I myself had braces on my last one or two shows. They loved it because of how "normal" it made the kids look. It was frustrating that my awkward phase was caught on video for everyone to see, but there you have it. Making kids feel better about having braces.

ROGER PRICE: I chose them for their potential, not for their experience. I tried to build up the self-esteem of the kids and let them always be aware of how important they were: to the show, to me, to the survival of Nickelodeon. This had the effect of calming kids down.

VANESSA LINDORES: I did not audition. Carole Hay was my fourth-grade teacher, and somehow I ended up in her drama class she was teaching outside of school. Roger Price came into the class and would choose children to put on the show. It still baffles me, but somehow I ended up on it . . . for a long time.

ROGER PRICE: If you're a girl who looks in the mirror and sees an imperfect face staring back at you, might you not take a little comfort from cross-eyed Vanessa being on your favorite show?

JUSTIN CAMMY: Vanessa was cross-eyed and everybody constantly made fun of Lisa's weight. I was clearly chubby for a period. Some of the

kids couldn't act and were clearly there representing a certain look or group. The show defied the star-good-looks mentality and let kids be kids.

ADAM REID: The drama class was run in a very noncompetitive way. It was like Second City or Groundlings. It wasn't like Roger came in the room and said, "You, you, and you are coming on the show."

ROGER PRICE: In the classes, it became obvious who was a future star and who was a spear-carrier. Nearly all of the kids got a chance to go in front of the cameras. But the ones that set my Geiger counter racing in the auditions were the ones that continued to do so in drama class and on set.

ABBY HAGYARD: Alasdair had no reason to be jealous of a Kevin Kubusheskie or a Lisa Ruddy, because everyone was one of a kind. The kids were all taught that. You are what you are, and if you don't get chosen for something, it doesn't mean somebody else is better than you; it means that somebody fit the category better. If you're four-foot-three and he's six-foot-one, it's not because you're not talented. It's because you're four-foot-three.

CHRISTINE MCGLADE: It was more of a collaborative ensemble feeling. No one was put in a special position, including me.

JUSTIN CAMMY: There were those of us who were certainly not at the level of Christine or Lisa or Alasdair. There was a hierarchy and everyone knew what that hierarchy was. Roger had his favorites. He had a very, very special bond with Alasdair, and when Adam came around, it was clear he was deemed a rising star.

ADAM REID: They would go through this *huge* process. The first thing was a height restriction. If you were over a certain height restriction, you were not going to go in. Roger was looking for short kids. They could grow up on the show and still look like a kid.

ALAN GOODMAN: The fact is that Nickelodeon was really created between demographics. Personalities are built in, but it's when you become aware of your own personality that your memories begin. That's where that tween demographic kind of asserts itself: six to eleven. That's where you're coming into your own, becoming aware of your own personality. By the time you hit twelve, you're kind of off into a new thing at that point.

DEE LADUKE: When that hormone shift starts happening, that's when you start to dream about separating from your family. *Hey Dude* being on a dude ranch was a romantic setting that most kids can only dream

about, but that would still be a safe setting. Kids that age are just starting to be free: free to pursue relationships, free to have their first jobs. This was a show for eight- to ten-year-olds, *not* the older kids who were in it. It was an aspirational series for kids to think about where they'd be four years from now.

RITA HESTER: We referred to our live theatrical work as "tween" entertainment, and we actually coined that phrase. We never heard anyone else say "tween" in the eighties. It was kids who were older but not yet in high school. It was skewed to kids who didn't quite know who they were yet.

MIKE KLINGHOFFER: And that's the way almost all the Nickelodeon shows at that point in time came about: You need to find the group you are aiming at and then hope it is going to work "lower" and "upper."

MIKE SPELLER: I was still young enough where I could have fun with the kids on *Welcome Freshmen* during the downtimes but too young to try to be paternal, for sure.

KIRK BAILY: Most of those kids were first-timers, so with me being an older actor, they vacillated between thinking of me as a mentor, a confidant, an older brother, or a father figure.

ABBY HAGYARD: It was an absolute honor to work with someone like Les Lye. He was a legend and an unsung hero. Such a kind, sweet guy. And silly as hell. Over the years, my greatest joy—and it was hard to do—was to surprise him in something.

MARJORIE SILCOFF: Making Les laugh was better than gold. Those of us who did that will take it to our grave. It was a real testament to him that he could appreciate the comedy of a teenager.

JUSTIN CAMMY: Les Lye was a hoot even when he wasn't on the set.

BRENDA MASON: Les was in so many sketches that he often didn't know all of his lines. You'll notice he usually has a clipboard in his hand. His script was attached to it. I loved him and miss him.

ABBY HAGYARD: The reason they hired an adult male actor and an adult female actor was because we provided the structure for the kids. Nickelodeon was doing the same thing for the shows it chose: providing structure to allow these producers of these crazy, unique shows to be a little more free-form and to take risks that they might not otherwise have been able to take.

JUDY GRAFE: It felt like that's what it should be. There was always in the back of my mind that *Pete & Pete* was obviously about the two

boys, so I was always aware that I was there to be a straight man, sort of. But every once in a while it would occur to me, "Okay, yeah, they get their influence from *whom*? Oh, let's see: Mom and Dad!"

TOBY HUSS: Hardy Rawls is a sweet, regular, solid man. And a guy like my character, dancing around saying "pipe" all the time, didn't exactly fit into his worldview. But he was pretty generous. Sometimes I'd work to confound Hardy. Hardy rolled with everything. He's a supreme nut.

HARDY RAWLS: Most of the time I would look at Toby and say, "What are you *doing*?" There was no problem for me to react to that as an actor. And when Toby says, "Hold me, son. Hold me!" he would add lines like, "You have cold hands for a man, Don."

CHUCK VINSON: Elizabeth Hess was always fun. Joe O'Connor, I think, had to understand that this was a kids' show and that the main character was a kid. Joe's a great actor, but after a while you kinda have to take a backseat and understand that it's *CLARISSA Explains It All*, not *The Darling Family*.

ELIZABETH HESS: Mitchell Kriegman told me after the second or third episode, "Elizabeth, I know you have a very big range as an actress and . . . you're just not going to be able to use it all in this." And I totally, completely understood what that meant. When kids tune into the show, no matter what happens in it, they know that the grounding in it is the mom. No matter how odd things get, Janet Darling will be there at the end of the day.

GERRY LAYBOURNE: To work at Nick, you had to believe in what we were doing, you had to like to play, and you had to like kids.

FRED SEIBERT: We were not kids. We didn't have kids. I'm not sure we *liked* kids.

MELANIE CHARTOFF: I don't have kids, although all my friends *act* like kids.

KATHERINE DIECKMANN: We were all in our twenties, so we didn't know what kids were like. None of us had children. None of us had any idea what kids were like . . . except maybe our own childhood—which Will McRobb and I referenced a lot. Will would write a bully and we would be like, "Just like Donnie Young."

DANNY TAMBERELLI: *Pete & Pete* was sort of Will McRobb's and Chris Viscardi's idea of their unique childhood fantasy world. And that's where Wellsville and all the quirky, left-of-the-dial humor came from.

JOE STILLMAN: Will had a particular relationship with his father that had been a very informing principle for him in his life, some of it positive, some of it less positive.

WILL MCROBB: My father and Mr. Wrigley have similarities. My father was ROTC, lots of stories of driving tanks . . . The perfect embodiment of these classic dad convictions. He was an outdoorsman and I was content to read in my room. At one point when I was younger, he became completely fed up with me farting as much as I did. It was a pivotal moment when I saw his sarcasm and humor come together in a perfect storm. "We're going to build you a farting room." He sketched the dimensions on an envelope. It was rewritten to become one of our "sixty-second" *Pete*'s, called "The Burping Room." A lot of that dad stuff was an homage to my father.

JOHN KRICFALUSI: I did the vein-popping stuff sometimes; my dad was like that when I was growing up. I always had to keep from laughing. And the more I snickered at his lectures, the more his pecs would twitch and his veins would bulge.

BILL WRAY: John would tell all these stories about his dad. About what a horrible, horrible person he was. John had a famous story that we used later on where he had spent the whole summer drawing a cartoon book to give to his father for Christmas and then his father said, "You wasted a whole summer on *this*?" and tossed it in the fire.

JIM GOMEZ: There was the story about John's dad burning his comics and all that. Initially, John used to portray his father as an evil ogre monster who lorded over him and made his life miserable. I never met his father, but other people who met him said he was the nicest guy. And I know he was helping John out a lot.

BILL WRAY: You meet him . . . and he's the greatest guy in the world and has been supporting John all this time so John could endeavor to make cartoons. Are they guilt payments, or was John a storyteller from day one? Nobody knows.

WILL MCROBB: There's a cruel streak in John and some of the characters he had. John had some anger issues that made their way into *Ren & Stimpy*.

JOE STILLMAN: Will always had a lot of edge in his writing, and I think Little Pete is kind of Will's id coming out from his childhood to get revenge on his father.

MICHAEL MARONNA: Chris, Will, and Katherine probably made the show and designed the show at the right time. They—in their twenties and

thirties—were still close enough where they could still clearly feel that nostalgia and see what resonates, what is fake, what is being used by the next generation that doesn't ring true.

D.J. MACHALE: That was the thing that kind of separated *Are You Afraid of the Dark?* from a lot of other shows. A writer would come in and say he had an idea for something—maybe a haunted car that eats people. "Okay . . . but *who are the kids*?" It's when we're *with* those kids that we can find out about the haunted car. We had real kids with real, interesting stories that *intersected* with whatever the spooky thing would be.

ROSS HULL: When they had callbacks was when D.J. came in, and I really remember meeting him, because he had this presence about him. It wasn't intimidating. I kind of felt like there was almost this instant connection in terms of just getting what it was he was trying to do. And I think he read my personality.

JOANNA GARCIA: D.J. MacHale wasn't afraid to get down and dirty and hang out with the kids. He was just a fun guy to work with. We always felt really connected to him.

JEFF FISHER: I'm still a big kid, you know. You never lose that. That's what D.J. was like, too.

ERIK MACARTHUR: Steve Slavkin was a big, soft kid. He's just a good dude. Has some kids of his own.

STEVE SLAVKIN: I wouldn't go so far as to say "father figure," but I was twice their age, so maybe they thought of me as an older sibling. I definitely looked out for them. Wanted to make sure they were happy. Games for them on set, tutors, making sure they were safe at all times. Made sure we covered all the laws we needed to. Took care of their parents, made sure they were comfortable, and included them in everything.

JOE O'CONNOR: Once, later on in the show, Sean O'Neal was doing something in the hallway and I went, "Hey, Sean. Stop that!" And he turned around and went, "Hey, you're not my father." He got to that age where he was getting a little rebellious. But he was right.

SEAN O'NEAL: It was very much like having a mom and dad on set.

MITCHELL KRIEGMAN: I felt very protective of Melissa and was making sure she had money for clothes and that her guardian was taking care of her all right. It was my highest priority. She was like my daughter for those years, and I think about it a lot because my daughter is that age now.

MELISSA JOAN HART: Mitchell looked out for me. He was worried about things. All the pitfalls of being a child star: where my money was going, how I was behaving . . . that kind of thing. He would always come down to Orlando and visit and take me to my favorite restaurants. He would get me great birthday gifts, cared about me, and took care of me.

CHRISTINE TAYLOR: Our director, Fred Keller, was the father figure trying to help us navigate through it all, because our parents weren't there. They would come in and out, but Fred was the real father figure to me at the time. And his wife was there, too.

ROGER PRICE: I often told them something along these lines: "I am not your parent. I do not have to love you. I am not your teacher. I do not have to educate you or improve you or give you a second chance. I am a producer, and I have a show to make. You get some free drama training from one of the best teachers there is. You get selected for the show by doing your best to do what Carole and I ask you to do. I select from those of you that I believe will be best for the show, and these are not necessarily the ones I like best, or even like at all. What you or your parents want has nothing to do with it. What I want has nothing to do with it. It is all down to what is best for the show. If chosen, you will give up your time, do what you are told, do your very best, never give us any hassles, and get well paid for it. That's all there is to it."

BOB BLACK: Every once in a while, I'll see Simon Cowell in action, and he kind of reminds me of Roger. That blunt, to-the-point, British producer type. Although Roger was never as mean.

CHUCK VINSON: I think Melissa did a Jell-O commercial with Bill Cosby when she was really young. So that was an ongoing joke. She would say, "I bet they didn't do this on the *Cosby* set!"

ELIZABETH HESS: That added element of having a guy friend come in through the window? Wow, how revolutionary is *that*?

MITCHELL KRIEGMAN: I wanted this boy who was in Clarissa's life to be her friend, and I didn't want him to have to go up the stairs or through the front door and talk to her parents every time. It was a way to get him in her bedroom and start interacting faster. And it was also a way to show that they had this real friendship that wasn't about anything sexual. They were friends, and I wanted to keep it pre-sexual. Which worked . . . right up until she was sixteen.

CHUCK VINSON: Initially, they were just young as hell. Then the voice starts getting deeper and Sam's hair started to be stylized a little bit

more . . . It became an ongoing joke, like, they're getting a little bit old here for having this guy using a ladder and coming up to her room. People understand they're close friends, but the reality is she's gonna be changing clothes more often . . . and these characters have to grow with the show.

SEAN O'NEAL: We were definitely going through life at that point, so they included that in the scripts.

DAVID ELLIS: The show started with Clarissa at thirteen and ended with her at sixteen, almost seventeen. We had to update her room every season as the show evolved. She had a pet alligator in a little wading pool in the beginning, and we had to get rid of him after a while. That might have also been pressure from the ASPCA, though.

ELIZABETH HESS: I asked Mitchell why he cast me. I'm not like, you know, a commercial mom. And he said, "You know, all little boys want to fall in love with their mothers, and they want a sexy mom. You're a sexy mom." Well, that's enough to flatter *any* actress!

DEBBY BEECE: There was a term we used—URST: UnResolved Sexual Tension—when we were trying to develop tension between characters in our shows.

GEOFFREY DARBY: Really, believe it or not, URST is all about the hair. I can't say enough about the importance of hair.

SEAN O'NEAL: I had been in New York before, but this was above and beyond. We arrived at the audition and I saw Melissa, who I believe was eating a bagel. I was there for a few minutes, possibly had read the scene, and then Mitchell asked me to leave the room. Before I stepped out, though, he told me to mess up my hair. I was a nutcase when I was in school and a little bit of a class clown, so I always used to rub my heavy-duty cowlicks, which made my hair stand on end. When I left the room and messed up my hair, I came back in and Mitchell said, "Yeah, you've got the job."

GEOFFREY DARBY: Since boys mature slower than girls, we were thinking more about young girls. This is in any of the psychology readings we were going through back then. URST, more than anything, was about affection and not so much about sexuality and that when young girls are getting older, they go from having affection for their girlfriends to boys in their classes or wherever they may be. So by having longer, more feminine hair for some of the boys—and you can see this every few years with teen idols or whatever—the girls can transfer their affection. And it's unattainable, that's very important, too; it's gotta be unattainable affection, because they're on a TV show—to the boys that

they're watching on the shows. And then as the girls continue to get older, they start reacting *against* the good-boy, more feminine look, and that's when the boys' hair is cut to make them look less feminine.

SEAN O'NEAL: As Sam got older, he got a little bit less—like everybody, I guess—cutesy and more manly.

SARAH CONDON: We did a fair amount of cutting his hair and dealing with his clothes to turn him into the character that we wanted him to be.

ROGER PRICE: Teenage girls seem to like young and girlish boys for their sex fantasies, for that is the basis of pop star worship.

SCOTT WEBB: Slime was also a big part of how we perceived URST. It's, "When I go out and get messy, I'm doing something I know my parents don't approve of. But *man*, it feels good." And sex is like that. That was the other way we used slime.

DEBBY BEECE: Green slime was *not* an example of URST. Everybody had their own takes on things. It could be a real free-for-all at Nickelodeon.

ALISON FANELLI: We were all really close, and it was really hard for Michael Maronna and me when they started writing the romantic stuff on *Pete & Pete*. The kisses were absolutely horrific for us both. Both times, we avoided each other for the entire week. It was pretty difficult. As soon as they'd get their take, we'd be embarrassed for a couple of hours after. Michael asked Katherine to shoot the kiss scenes early in the week so we could get them over with. In the marching band episode, they did that *very last*, so we were tortured the entire week. We got over it fine.

SEAN O'NEAL: Melissa and I were old enough and had a boyfriend and girlfriend when we did the date scene. I still remember the tie I wore and the fact that the set was that little Italian joint. We were comfortable with it.

MICHAEL BOWER: There was the episode where I was the fat guy trying to get the girl. Dina. I don't think Heidi wanted to be a part of it. A part of *me* in any way. Whether it was because of BO or whatever, she was not happy getting ready to dance with me. She did not want to rehearse. She shied away from me. I had to make this joke while eating pizza, and I kept doing it because she literally couldn't stop laughing.

HEIDI LUCAS: When Michael as Donkeylips was trying to tell me a funny joke and he had pizza in his mouth, he was just trying to be

personable. But I thought I was going to lose it . . . and I did!

MICHAEL BOWER: She was so nervous. It was embarrassing because it was sort of a love scene and she was a young girl. She was not ready to deal with that.

HEIDI LUCAS: There's one outtake of me just absolutely losing it. You can hear the director in the back: "Heidi! Get your stuff together!" "I'm sorry! He's really funny!" "I know! He's *supposed* to be funny. Pull it together!"

MICHAEL BOWER: The director, Peter Baldwin, was like, "C'mon! We gotta do this! He's making you laugh. Get your shit together!" She finally came through in the end, and the result was great.

MEGAN BERWICK: With the episode where ZZ falls for Budnick, I think the writers just watched us, and I don't think anybody missed the fact that I thought Danny Cooksey absolutely walked on water. He and I never dated. He was much, much older than me. He never took advantage of his big brother thing over me.

DANNY COOKSEY: It was all professional.

HEIDI LUCAS: I'm lucky to say I had a friendship with Danny Cooksey beyond just the cast member friendship.

MICHAEL BOWER: Heidi Lucas—Dina—and bad boy Bobby Budnick started enjoying each other's company toward the end of the last season. They may have hugged a couple of times, whatever the case is. They became pretty good friends. It didn't go beyond that. Young romance.

FRED KELLER: Christine Taylor and David Lascher had a little romance going on at one point. That was an awful lot of fun.

DAVID LASCHER: I don't think it affected the work at all, and personally, it just added to how wonderful the experience was. We always worked well together and had an amazing relationship. It definitely didn't make anything awkward.

LISA MELAMED: I knew they were dating and tried to be the adult cousin. I was thirty. My attitude was, I didn't want to get too into the kids' business.

FRED KELLER: It was fifteen-year-olds in love. They handled it very well.

CHRISTINE TAYLOR: For two seventeen-year-olds who didn't know how to handle it at all, when it played out and we needed to end it, we just didn't know how to work together after the fact. I vividly remember

an episode after we had just sort of broken up and David had gone away to New York and I had gone back to Pennsylvania for the summer. And then we came back and he had a new girlfriend he was telling me about and I was telling him about my new boyfriend and we just didn't do well with it. I wasn't as aware of it until we weren't speaking to each other and they wrote this episode where he and I were, I don't know, "conspiring" against the rest of the group at the Bar None Ranch and it was like every single scene we were together and we would have to pretend to be best friends in each scene and then they would yell "Cut!" and we would walk in separate directions. It's something I laugh about now.

BLAKE SENNETT: Venus and I were fond of each other, and they wrote that into the show.

ADAM REID: Alasdair and I were vying for Alanis Morissette's affection. It was a lot of fun to play up those aspects of our young teenage life as we were living it. *And* make fun of it. It didn't hurt that we both actually had crushes on her, too.

DAVE RHODEN: I had a total crush on Melissa Joan Hart. We went on two dates. She was a sweetheart and a little shier than people might think. Their set was opposite ours, so we would run over there and say hey. I was probably just too nervous to know what to do with myself.

SEAN O'NEAL: I invited her to my eighth-grade dance. Something like that. Maybe one of my proms.

DAVID SIDONI: Everyone realized there was potential for stuff to get really childish and junior high-ish, so rather than let that happen, we decided that there weren't going to be any issues.

SHAWN DAYWALT-LUTZ: There was so much packed into that half hour. We had a *lot* to do. We had to get it done. So if you had an issue with someone, you weren't going to get your work done. It was really important to all of us that the show be good, and that was our highest priority.

JULENE RENEE-PRECIADO: There were no hookups. No one dated.

MICKI DURAN: I got together once with Mark David. But that wasn't anything. I had a crush on Ivan Dudynsky. And I always had a crush on John Crane. I was so young! I got crushes!

MICHELLE TRACHTENBERG: Danny Tamberelli was probably among my first crushes—the lead singer of New Kids on the Block, Green Day, and maybe Danny. So that was fun as a little girl discovering boys. A lot of growing up happened for me on the *Pete & Pete* show.

SARAH CONDON: Obviously, when they become teenagers and young women, they graduate into a certain whole other thing. Sometimes it can be a bit . . . *abrupt* for some people, because you know them in one way and then you're learning about them in another way. It's a hard road for female actresses in that regard.

CHUCK VINSON: Melissa, she was not a young girl anymore. Her body started to change. I mean, *her breasts were growing.* She started her period, and you *don't* want to get in a woman's way when she's having her period!

LISA LEDERER: Clarissa was not going to become overtly sexy; we weren't going to go that route, for a variety of reasons. It wouldn't have been true to who she was.

ALISON FANELLI: We didn't even start wearing makeup until three or four years into *Pete & Pete*. We tried to keep it as down-home and natural as possible.

LISA LEDERER: At one point, Melissa was saying she wanted to have her belly button pierced, and she did, and she wanted to show it on the show. But there was a little bit of *I Dream of Jeannie* there, because we could never show the belly button! They felt it might have crossed the line and would be "too sexy."

ALISON FANELLI: There was a note about my skirt in a certain episode: "The skirt was a little short on Ellen, so remember we need to keep this covered."

LISA LEDERER: We were never going to show cleavage; Melissa was never going to show up in a bikini top, that kind of thing. She did become a little more sultry as the show progressed, but that was probably appropriate.

MELISSA JOAN HART: I don't think anyone in my camp was shocked by the *Maxim* issue with me in it. I think the only people who were shocked by it were the *Archie* comics people who owned *Sabrina* and were looking to get paid out.

ELIZABETH HESS: I personally didn't see the cover of *Maxim* but certainly heard about it from my NYU students. I think Melissa wanted so much to be seen as a woman after being a child actor from the age of four. And sadly, I still think objectification is the most obvious way to try to achieve that. Although it undermines rather than underlines a woman's stunning singularity and strengths.

SEAN O'NEAL: As far as Melissa's *Maxim* spread: Kudos! It takes a lot as a celebrity personality—especially a female—to expose herself. It was

daring but necessary to put her in a different category.

MITCHELL KRIEGMAN: Oh, you know . . . That was just her mom trying to change her profile. My job was just to not have things like that go on while she was working with *me*.

CHUCK VINSON: I'd been down that road before with Lisa Bonet from *The Cosby Show* being in that Robert De Niro movie . . . My statement about Melissa was this: She has grown up.

JOE O'CONNOR: I don't think she should have done it, myself. But there's this thing in LA where they make decisions based on this kind of stuff: initial sexual reactions. Most of the actresses in LA, while they're still young, try to do this. If a girl hasn't made it out here, in terms of movies, and hasn't gotten that image by the time she's twenty-five, twenty-six, twenty-seven, she's finished and they move on to younger girls. Pretty terrible. Actually, they do it with young *guys* now, too. Still, I think Melissa should have gone and tried to do it a little different. Is that way too much? I had too much coffee.

MELISSA JOAN HART: I think it was one of the best things for my career. I was twenty-three and had already been on the cover of *Details* in my underwear, and no one made a big deal about *that*, and here I was doing *Maxim* to, you know, promote a movie, and *I'm a full-blown adult* . . . There was this big controversy as to whether or not I was "allowed" to be sexy. It was hilarious. Of course, for like a week I panicked—"Am I gonna be fired? Am I gonna be sued?" But after that week went by and they were talking about it on *Leno* and *Regis & Kathie Lee* and the *Post* had it every day, it really drove the numbers up at the box office for my movie that week.

JUSTIN CAMMY: Alanis Morissette was prematurely mature for her age. In a scary way. Prematurely driven. "I'm going to be a star." Not just in the way she carried herself, but physically, sexually. Clearly other things were going on in her life I was not privy to at the time.

ADAM REID: Alanis played a demo tape one time when she was probably twelve. Maybe she was thirteen, but it was one of her first recording efforts. She was definitely singing about "adult" concepts. That was the first thing that really struck me: *Wow, she's really mature. She's thinking about some* deep *shit.*

BRENDA MASON: She was definitely a talented songwriter, but way too much has been made of the "Alanis thing." She was only in five episodes, and I directed her in all of them. Roger wasn't overly fond of her, feeling she didn't "stand out" as a character. And he didn't like her short, boyish haircut. I'm not sure she was really comfortable in

the sketch comedy milieu either. What the crew members remember about her is her deep commitment to music. She developed a rapport with one of the audio guys, and he helped her with some of her initial recordings. Nothing was ever released.

VANESSA LINDORES: I still have her first two singles on a forty-five that she gave me back then. Alanis and I were friends. I wish she had stayed around longer. She was very focused on her singing, but she wasn't weird about it. I'm not at all surprised by her success.

JOHN BINKLEY: I had a strong commitment to casting fifteen-ish kids to play fifteen-year-olds. We had only one issue in that area, and it was a pretty clear one, because it turned out that Brooke—played *brilliantly* by Robyn Ross—wasn't actually fifteen when we started. We hadn't been validating people's birth certificates or anything. If they looked right, that's what counted. But I discovered after the first season that she was eighteen in the second round, which was shot about a year after the first one. And she started looking older. By the third season, all of a sudden she's nineteen and she's *really* looking older. We reluctantly let her go and recast her. Robyn was *not* replaceable. I made a mistake. We should have kept her even if she looked forty-five.

CHRISTINE MCGLADE: My last couple of years, I was so *clearly* older than the other kids that it probably wasn't a good thing for the show. I had already moved to Toronto and was ready to get on with my life and was flying back to do my stuff. I probably stayed on a good couple of years past my due date.

ALISON FANELLI: The last year of the show, Michael and Chris and Will and I sat down and really thought that Michael and I were getting a little old for the stuff they were writing. It was a *kids'* show. So we knew that we might be getting phased out if *Pete & Pete* did continue, especially with Danny getting older and the "Nightcrawlers" episode that focused more on him and his friends. So that helped me launch out of the business.

KEVIN KUBUSHESKIE: It was difficult to watch that happen to someone else knowing it was just a matter of time before you were done. It was a very different lifestyle during production, and for a kid who's in the middle of stumbling through the world trying to make sense of everything, it was a huge part of our identity. So to lose it, you lost that part of who you were, that extended family, those relationships, that routine, and all the conveniences that came along with it.

JOSH MORRIS: Roger tended to lose interest in the boys when "their balls

dropped," as he'd say. He wasn't interested in them anymore. He probably wasn't even interested in them as *people* anymore. And he had gotten very close with a lot of the boys on the show. I know that happened to Alasdair.

TOBY HUSS: These kids had all these different people in their lives. And when you take that away from them, it's a jarring and weird thing. It was for me, too.

ALASDAIR GILLIS: And the timing—being fifteen, sixteen—a lot of figuring out who you are, about being vulnerable. I might not have been able to vocalize at the time a sense of needing to be reassured. Letting kids know that there's nothing wrong with them—it's really just this thing we're doing where the fit isn't right, and it's more about networks than it is about the people. It's strange: There's a lot there in terms of knowing how important childhood or being a child was for Roger in particular—that's what drove him—and then there was an unspoken realization that I was growing out of the thing that was central or important to him on some level. None of us were going to stay kids. It took a while to figure some of that out.

CHRISTINE MCGLADE: At the beginning, it was harder because the kids were more close to my age, and by the time they left the show, they were good friends of mine. That was a bit weird because kids would grow out of it really quickly, whereas I was in some sort of weird time machine where I wasn't aging.

RICK GALLOWAY: I was just happy to continue the process, but that was the hardest thing, saying good-bye to cast members and hello to new ones. You spend three years with some people of a solid team and it's just . . . awkward. We were so young, and it was a decision made so over our heads.

DAVE RHODEN: There was no animosity about that at all. I was actually really excited for the people who got to stay. The worst thing was missing hanging out with Chris Lobban, my buddy. But at the same time, I hadn't seen any of my high school friends in basically two and a half years. I literally went on one more audition for something else and then never went to another audition again.

VANESSA LINDORES: Personally, the turnover was *very* hard for me. I would become friends with girls on the show, and then before I would know it, they'd be gone. Marjorie and Alanis are examples. We would have sleepovers and hang out on the set, then . . . gone. I was ready to go when it was my turn to pass the baton.

BOB BLACK: It was obvious that kids grow up—that's what they do. It's

no different from being in school. When you're in middle school, you have eighth graders, and the next year comes along, and the eighth graders aren't there anymore. I don't think it was that big a deal, simply because this was just one more aspect of how life is when you're a kid.

JUSTIN CAMMY: I don't think that was ever really communicated in a way that would have helped people. You should probably be told that —especially as a child—at the very beginning: "We like you, you're important. But this is a one- or two-year gig and then we're going to be done with you." It's never good to reach your peak in high school. That's not a healthy way to exist.

ROGER PRICE: It was my nightmare. It gave me about the same degree of personal agony as the moment when you give the vet the nod to go ahead with the lethal needle for an old and much-loved dog. If one thing finally drove me from working with children, it was having to do this over and over. Whichever way you slice it, I was interfering hugely and irreversibly in their childhood experience.

DANNY TAMBERELLI: I feel like *Pete & Pete* definitely influenced my life in a lot of ways. I'm a musician. That's what I do. I was into it right when we were getting into the show. And that "Hard Day's Pete" episode with me finding the song, I personally related to that. I got my first bass during the shooting of that. And haven't stopped playing bass since.

ALISON FANELLI: Like my character on the show, I started becoming interested in science and medicine—which is what I'm doing now—and in a way, Katherine thought that life was imitating art or the other way around. Ellen was very much in the science world and always asking questions. I don't think there's anything bad about a character like that influencing a kid.

MEGAN BERWICK: My natural personality is actually quite close to ZZ. Twenty-something years later, I'm working in Haiti doing economic development and financial inclusion. I basically am the woman ZZ would have become. In fact, before I moved to Haiti, I saw Steve Slavkin and he said, "I'm very proud of you, ZZ. I wrote you, created you, and look how far you've gone!" Totally joking, but very sweet.

STEVE SLAVKIN: I don't think it's strange that Megan would become ZZ. She was a really special kid, and it's great to see that she's utilizing her skills to make the world a better place.

JASON ZIMBLER: They wrote for me, they pushed me, they accounted for me. That's the effect of me on Ferguson. The effect of Ferguson on

me? Well, he was cerebral, and I liked that they gave me this strong mind, this strong intellectual figure to be a model. He was articulate and well-spoken and his mind fired all over the place and he was ambitious. I wasn't watching Buckley and I wasn't as politically aware, but I was beginning to be. I don't think I chased a lot of teenagers into hardcore Republicanism. I'm more mainstream. I would consider myself independent. Socially liberal, fiscally conservative.

MICHAEL MARONNA: We all still look like ourselves. My image has been close to a similar thing for a long time. But that wouldn't be the worst thing to go down. There are other roles I've done that are more recent and more fresh in people's minds. They would be just as funny to have as my epitaph. I'm kinda grateful to have this character.

KENAN THOMPSON: I got lucky because I was named after myself for my entire Nickelodeon career. It's very clearly me and not necessarily a super-stretch outside of my character. I've been lucky that I've never really had to fight that. The only thing I'm still attached to when people see me is a "Kenan and Kel" thing. But that's not a bad thing, because I'm still myself.

MICHAEL BOWER: A few years later, you meet fans and they constantly call you that name and they have no respect for you at all after you introduce yourself as a human being. That's when it gets a little annoying. Being typecast is an industry standard. I don't like it, but now that I'm producing, that's how they do it!

JOE O'CONNOR: I know a show like *Clarissa* would never go on now. People on the show wouldn't be pretty enough. I have seven-year-old twins, and when we turn on some Disney and Nickelodeon shows, the girls are gorgeous, the boys are really handsome, and the shows are far more wink-and-nod. Times have changed. Selling habits have changed. Everybody's upped the ante a little.

ADAM WEISSMAN: There's more responsibility on a show like *Hannah Montana*. *Hannah*, in particular, was much more than a show. It was a *brand*. You had a very lucrative concert component to it, she represented a lot of things to a lot of girls, and so there was a responsibility to maintain this multibillion-dollar brand . . . which is something you wouldn't have on a show like *Welcome Freshmen*, basically done under the radar.

ROGER PRICE: I did not let Alanis Morissette sing on *You Can't Do That on Television*. If I did have the kids sing, there was a real danger one or more of them would become a pop star—à la Justin Bieber—as had happened with some British kids in my stable. And that creates all

manner of problems, not least of which is security and crowd control . . . and record companies and concerts and managers. And it all takes away their time and attention from the TV series. Probably the best thing I did for Alanis was not to have her sing on the show.

JOANNA GARCIA: I've always said that it's kind of our duty as young people in a position where we are exposed on a larger scale to a lot of other young people to be a great role model. But now it's almost frightening how much pressure is put on them. I was a working actor in television but was still able to make my mistakes in private and do stupid things without being under the scrutiny of paparazzi constantly following me. It's just a different world now.

LARISA OLEYNIK: I wasn't responsible for selling backpacks. I didn't have a side career as a pop star. These kids now are doing so much. And I mean, more power to them. I was just not that ambitious. That's the difference I see, because there's so much more responsibility now. And so much more *publicity*. But that's just the world now. It's funny to be thirty now, isn't it? It's funny that we can actually witness these changes; that we can recognize that we are of an older generation that has passed. That's something I don't think I would have been prepared for as a twelve-year-old. Really, hats off to these kids who are doing *so much* right now. I just showed up to work and that was it.

VANESSA LINDORES: Don't know. Never really cared much.

KEVIN KUBUSHESKIE: Depending on who worked the props, the recipe varied. I think it was mainly gelatin, food coloring, oatmeal, and eventually some shampoo.

JUSTIN CAMMY: Green slime is made out of Cream of Wheat, green food coloring, and Johnson's Baby Shampoo. And water. It was fun to be there on set the days they were making it, because they had to get the consistency exactly right. Sometimes it was too watery; sometimes it was a little too thick. They had to get the right blend.

JOSH MORRIS: The first mixture was loose oatmeal with green dye. By the end, they just shoved green dye into a big bucket of cottage cheese. The original green slime was much nicer. In later seasons, it didn't look nearly as good.

ALASDAIR GILLIS: There were numerous incarnations. Ours was oatmeal, liquid dish soap, a lot of water to thicken it. Sometimes green Jell-O.

BRENDA MASON: The Jell-O version was short-lived. Too chunky. I don't know when the liquid latex started being added.

SCOTT WEBB: In our tenure of using it, it was basically oatmeal, shampoo, and green food coloring. It was the "No More Tears" shampoo, so you could eat it if you wanted to, but you wouldn't want to.

ROGER PRICE: To make cleanup easier, slime did contain baby shampoo. But too much and it could sting the eyes, which had to remain open for the humor to work. Imagine that! The courage it takes . . .

KEVIN KUBUSHESKIE: The slime did sometimes burn my eyes.

BOB BLACK: There was a number of different formulas for green slime. When I was there, it was Cream of Wheat and cold water with green food coloring. We would have to blow-dry the kids' hair, then brush it out. And even then, several days later, the kids would be walking around with green bits in their hair.

ROGER PRICE: We always sent the kids home a lot cleaner than they

came. Even if they weren't getting slimed, they would likely have their hair washed and trimmed.

JUSTIN CAMMY: I had to pick the slime out of my hair. It'd stay in there for a couple of days.

ALASDAIR GILLIS: It was pretty innocuous, actually. Slime wasn't very gross. But the idea came from something that was pretty noxious.

SCOTT WEBB: In the earliest days, it was actually a bucket of shit, according to Geoffrey.

GEOFFREY DARBY: The slime was an accident. Honestly. We had this joke on the dungeon set: "Don't any of you kids pull this chain!" We ended up going to the cafeteria, gave the prop guy a bucket, and said, "We want you to take all the stuff that was left on the plates the whole day. We'll add water to it and dump it on the kid." The kid's name was Tim Douglas. When he pulled the chain, we wanted it to look like sewage was coming out. That was the idea. We didn't get around to shooting the scene, because we couldn't go overtime with children. It's against the law. We put the set up again the following week to shoot that one scene, and the prop man came to me—this is a true story—and said, "We have a problem." The problem was that he didn't get a new bucket of slop. He just kept the old one. He had kept it backstage, and there were eight inches of green crud growing over the top of the bucket. It was really evil. God, did it smell! We had to get the scene. We couldn't get more slop . . . So we said, "Dump it on the kid anyway."

ROGER PRICE: Down came *not* the simulated contents of a toilet, but *green slime*. Evil-smelling green slime, which had everyone in the studio gagging. It was probably luminous. Green slime was not invented by anybody. It fermented itself into life. And it *was* alive!

BRENDA MASON: We could see the shock on the kid's face when the stuff hit him. We thought he was going to be sick, just from the smell alone. Roger was furious. It was to *look* disgusting, not *be* disgusting.

ROGER PRICE: If I had known at the time, I would not have done it. I was a professional producer! I was horrified when I found out and maybe a bit angry. We all felt sorry when we buried the kid afterward. Especially later on when we realized he was not actually dead.

GEOFFREY DARBY: Tim was fine afterward. He just took a shower. It got such a positive response from the audience that we wrote an entire show about slime.

ROGER PRICE: It was a gift, and the potential was immediately evident.

There was no doubt we would do that again.

BRENDA MASON: We had nowhere to go but up with the recipe from there.

BOB MITTENTHAL: In terms of the recipe, there was some mystique about it. People wanted to know what was in it. If we told them, they wouldn't want to know anymore. Somebody figured out, "Hey, let's pretend it's a secret!"

MARJORIE SILCOFF: I'm sorry, I was sworn to secrecy at age eleven and have never divulged it. I think Geoffrey Darby was the one who swore me to secrecy.

GEOFFREY DARBY: We made it out of Cream of Wheat and baby shampoo and green food coloring and a little bit of vegetable oil. That's basically all slime was.

ABBY HAGYARD: There's something innately delicious about something that disgusting and messy. I don't think they expected it to be that hugely popular. Roger came up with the slime and the water because he was frustrated by the kids at home always saying, "I don't know . . ." He said there should be a punishment for the "I don't know," and he found one! And it was a *hit*!

JUSTIN CAMMY: I was only slimed once and I fucked it up. It was the "Marketing" episode, and you can see the fuck-up on screen.

ALBIE HECHT: If you really want to get into it, you talk as you feel the slime, which slowly comes down on your head. Then your eyes look up as if—*what the hell's happening?*—and then you really look up right into it. And that's when they dump the big slime on you. Then you face forward because that's when we see it all over you.

JUSTIN CAMMY: They told me, "It's easy. When you say, 'I don't know,' look up a little bit so the slime hits your face. You want it over your face." So I said the trigger phrase, "I don't know," and looked up. But I closed my eyes before the slime hit, and you can see I was anticipating it. Why they didn't reshoot it . . . I don't know!

VANESSA LINDORES: My first one was the legendary multicolored slime scene in my first episode. I wasn't actually supposed to get slimed in that scene. It was meant for Christine. Often they would take the other actors off the set and do a single shot of the kid getting slimed, but because of the dialogue in that scene, they did a two-shot, so I stayed beside Christine the whole time. Since it wasn't me getting slimed, no one thought to give me the slime directions; hence, out of instinct I did everything you aren't supposed to do when getting slimed. I

flinched and cowered. Even so, I still nailed my line: “Boy, must be tough being a TV star!” Geoff Darby came out of the control room after that, laughing his head off and telling me I earned the slime bonus for that one. At nine, you don’t know enough to realize how weird your life has just become.

CHRISTINE MCGLADE: As an actor or host or performer, it was a nice challenge because we had to get it right. It was at the end of the day, and there was a big setup involved, whether it was slime or water. They’d have to get everyone off set, lay down plastic, shoot it so you wouldn’t see the ladder and the plastic, and all with the five people standing around us. It was gross, but it was kind of a fun thing to do.

BOB BLACK: By the time I got there, Christine had veto power over getting slimed. Which was most of the time. She *hated* getting slimed. In the “Movies” episode, *everybody* was going to get slimed, because that was Roger’s response to Nickelodeon saying, “We want more sliming!” The sketch was originally written where Christine was going to get slimed twice, but she changed it to where she got slimed once and then watered on top of that.

ALASDAIR GILLIS: When I think of getting slimed, I think of the end of the day—it’d usually be on weekends, lots of people around. Lots of crew. That sense of generally a really friendly bunch of people working together to make this show.

GEOFFREY DARBY: They all hated it. The parents didn’t really care one way or another, but one of the kids described it as standing under the rear of a cow when it lifts its tail.

BOB BLACK: Getting slimed they liked. They liked the extra money. They liked that the cameras were focused on them. But on the other hand, the slime was nasty stuff.

GEOFFREY DARBY: I have been “pied” by Ruth Buzzi. When I left the control room, they had arranged that and recorded it. But of course, I knew better than to get slimed.

ROGER PRICE: Are you kidding? Have you ever been slimed? It is horrible.

JOSH MORRIS: I did it as a casual thing to see what it felt like. It’s like taking a bath in mud. If you forget it’s not mud, it’s actually very nice. In a hot studio, though, the cottage cheese became foul if it wasn’t cleaned up efficiently.

JUSTIN CAMMY: It tasted like nothing. Like Cream of Wheat without sugar.

GEOFFREY DARBY: The water was early on. If you said the word, "Water," you got dumped on.

MARJORIE SILCOFF: The water was initially warm and then cold under the hot lights.

CHRISTINE MCGLADE: Sometimes it was kind of cold. Roger and Geoff might have done a little bit of that on purpose just to get a reaction of shock or surprise. For the most part, it was quite pleasant and we got paid extra.

BRENDA MASON: The bonus payments were introduced to ease the complaints about being slimed and watered. Once the kids knew there was an extra twenty-five or fifty dollars—a lot of money in eighties' dollars—the complaining miraculously stopped!

GEOFFREY DARBY: Using slime is really a leveler. It was a very simple way to bring them out of the rarified air of being a "TV star."

SCOTT WEBB: Roger understood that and took it a step further. It was a bonding moment between the kids on the television and the kids at home. "I got shit on at school today when I failed my math test. And look! *They're* getting dumped on the same way!"

GEOFFREY DARBY: How slime turned into the Nick thing was the same reason it resonated with the audience of *You Can't Do That on Television*. "You think your life is bad? You didn't have to write six hundred pages out of the dictionary for detention!" We took it to an absurd level to make kids feel that their lives weren't really that bad. Slime may be vile, but it's not violent. It's safe.

GERRY LAYBOURNE: We did get negative reports from George Gerbner's "violence on television" studies. He would give us a violence rating for slime that would count the same as a decapitation.

MIKE KLINGHOFFER: We wanted to be as disgusting as possible. "Let's see how far we can push that out in the world before we have to scale back!"

MITCHELL KRIEGMAN: When *Ren & Stimpy* first started, we were looking at jokes about fart bubbles in the bathtub. That optimized the Nick slime ethic and themes of what we were trying to do.

ROBIN RUSSO: Nothing ever grossed me out.

ANDY BAMBERGER: With early *Double Dare*, the studio would start stinking by Thursday with all the rotten food on the floor and everything.

HARVEY: We had this Plexiglas tank, and early in the run, we filled it with these postdated baked beans. It took *forever* to open that many cans; it was a big tank. At the end of the four days under hot lights, those beans were some pretty rancid stuff. How were we gonna get them out of there? We called this honey wagon guy. This is a guy who sucks out septic tanks for a living. After he was done sucking it out with a hose hooked up to his truck, he says to us, "You know what I do for a living, right? And I have never seen anything so disgusting in my entire life!"

MARC SUMMERS: When I walked in the first day in Philadelphia and saw all those obstacles and they were putting whipped cream and food coloring on, the first thing I said to Geoffrey Darby was, "What the hell is *that*?" And he said, "That's our obstacle course." I didn't know what the hell he was talking about, because when I had done the audition, I had just been asking questions and we had been doing these lame-ass physical challenges. I said, "Do you really think kids would want to do that?" That was my first thing: *Do kids want to jump in that crap?*

ALAN SILBERBERG: In the beginning of *Double Dare*, I didn't get how it was gonna work. How were people going to *want* to get into the physical challenges and go running through baked beans?

ROBIN RUSSO: I felt the opposite of that. Once I saw the very first group that came in for the very first show of *Double Dare*, I turned to my stage manager and I said, "This is gonna be a huge hit."

GERRY LAYBOURNE: The first day that we shot, I'm sitting in the bleachers and the set is so spectacular. The kids have *never* seen anything like this. The doors open, the kids come in. It was electric. I have never heard so many little kids swear in my life. It was fantastic.

KENAN THOMPSON: Along with *Danger Mouse* and *You Can't Do That on Television*, I was a big *Double Dare* fan. On *Double Dare*, they were just having a good time, you know what I'm sayin'? Jumping around in whipped cream just for fun. On *You Can't Do That on Television*, they were getting *slimed*. No other network was sliming people like that. The image of that green stuff coming down—every time I would turn it on, it would stay with me.

ANNETTE LESURE: The type of stuff we did on *Wild & Crazy Kids* was fun for *any* kid. At the time, producer Richard Crystal—who is Billy Crystal's brother and is a clone of him except for being lanky and narrow—did specifically ask me if I was into sports. And I said I didn't play football or anything like that. But it was very exciting because it

was new stuff every week. Stuff I'd never heard of before that they'd just randomly make up. One week we were on donkeys playing basketball, and another we'd be on trampolines or something else.

VENUS DEMILO: The pie fight with Heidi and me was really great. We stayed up so late doing that. Throwing pies, resetting, throwing pies, resetting . . . The next morning, I had to take my entrance exam for high school, and I still had whipped cream in my hair!

HEIDI LUCAS: There was an episode with a celebrity rock star coming to camp, and ZZ and I had to lay on the grass and use parts of our body covered in powder so he could see us from the plane flying overhead. Afterward, I was picking baking dough out of my hair and nails and every part of my body you could possibly imagine that could fit dough —which was disgusting—for days. That probably showed on my face. Could I have been a little high-maintenance? In times like that, yeah.

HARVEY: As I was the "goofy sidekick," when it was time to try out a new stunt or something, there was a lot of mess and I said it was okay, that I was low-maintenance. But here was my one hard-fast rule: "I'll do anything, jump into any substance you want . . . as long as the cameras are rolling." As long as I knew it wasn't just for somebody making me jump in a big pile of green shit, as long as it was for the narrative thread of the show. Which is a pretty highfalutin phrase to associate with *Double Dare*.

ROBIN RUSSO: Being the only female on *Double Dare*, I always got the brunt of the mess. I didn't mind the mess itself, and I got messy *a lot*. The problem was when I'd get *really* messy. Especially on the road show. I would have to get on a plane twenty minutes later. It's hard to fly when you're smelling like eggs and gook.

DONNIE JEFFCOAT: I was the one on *Wild & Crazy Kids* who got picked on, because I think Omar Gooding was protected by his mom half the time, so she would never let them do half the stuff they did to me to him. Any time there was a stunt or something crazy-messy, it was usually done to me. By the last season, I started complaining. "Really? At ten o'clock in the morning, you're going to pour this vat of crap on me?"

JOANNA GARCIA: At one point I had been slimed more than anybody for promotional things we had done. I would always blow the challenge or something and would end up getting slimed more than anybody. But I was okay with it.

BOB MITTENTHAL: The problem with the messiness is it became an arms race at that point. How do we top ourselves every time? There was

some frustration on that level.

ALAN SILBERBERG: Yeah, it was pretty crazy. What was hard was trying to come up with different ways to make messes. *Double Dare* got bigger and bigger, and the stunts got bigger and more mechanical. It was a lot of pies in the pants; I mean, how many different ways can you do that?

MIKE KLINGHOFFER: We always used to say at *Double Dare* that one of the reasons that show was successful was your parents told you not to play with your food and we're letting you play with your food. It's as simple as that. You were going against authority. You were going against the convention.

BOB HUGHES: We have no regrets about misleading children. We all grew up in the sixties and seventies, and we were all completely antiauthoritarian. It was just built into our DNA. We had suddenly been given this megaphone and we could turn on authority and say what *we* wanted to say. And that what *you're* going to say isn't always right.

ALAN GOODMAN: It's not that we ignored the rules and it's not that we thumbed our noses at the rules. It's that we didn't *trust* the rules more than we trusted our own understanding of things. So we actually lived by a lot of rules. We just questioned them first. I still do that in my career today.

BOB HUGHES: And a lot of times that helped us, because we did things that were unexpected or different. But other times . . . it hurt us because we were so naïve.

ELIZABETH HESS: I grew up with such a strict upbringing. For me, it was so liberating to be a liberal, permissive, generous, nonauthoritarian figure. I think *Clarissa* in a lot of ways broke a lot of the sitcom-y rules. I feel there's something very empowering in it for the kids watching it. So maybe the parents on the show are fallible and they trust their kids more than they should, but the message of that in *Clarissa* is that if kids mess up, it's about parents giving you some space to figure it out instead of having all the answers and being overprotective. It's a good thing I'm not a mom, huh?

CHUCK VINSON: With *Clarissa Explains It All*, it took me back to when I was a young kid and there were things I wanted to say to adults . . . but couldn't really say them. And I think that's what the success of the show was: You may *think* it, but Clarissa *said* it.

ABBY HAGYARD: If there were more of that kind of stuff, you'd have

fewer, say, Columbine issues. When you feel, as a human being—age has nothing to do with it—that you don't matter, that your opinion has no weight, that you have no value, that there's no future for you, that no one cares . . . that's the worst situation to be in.

CHRIS VISCARDI: We loved the idea of having a really defiant character like Little Pete. A character that would do and say all the things that we probably never as kids ourselves would have been able to express for kids. That also came out of the sensibility of the network at the time.

WILL MCROBB: Occasionally there was a word we couldn't use. We could use "blowhole" and "fudgelicker," but we couldn't say "nipple." It was pretty arbitrary.

HEATHER SHEFFIELD: The way we arrived at "sucks hose water" as a catchphrase was Nick wouldn't let us say something "sucks." It had to "suck eggs" or something. And somebody said, "Can we say it 'sucks hose water'?" Sometimes Standards and Practices could be odd at times. I did a bit that was a Pamprin takeoff that would give *other* people cramps. They didn't want to touch the subject of menstruation, and when they did agree to do it, we had to be very overt about it. They were really weird.

D.J. MACHALE: There was some concern from Nickelodeon up front that there was gonna be a big push-back against *Are You Afraid of the Dark?* So much so that they asked in the beginning if we could base our stories on literary antecedents so if we did get those complaints, we could say, "Hey, wait a minute! This is Edgar Allan Poe! This is Mary Shelley! This is classic stuff!"

STEVE SLAVKIN: There was never any shortage of notes, that's for sure. They were paying for it, and we wanted to make a show that they were happy with, so we had to accommodate some of their things. There was one scene where the kids had to sneak out of their bunk and go down to the lodge to get . . . *blank*. So I wrote that they were going down to get some candy, which is something I'd seen as a camp counselor. We got a note: *Can't have candy*. Why? Childhood obesity. So what were we supposed to do? They should sneak out and get *fruit*. I've never seen a kid risking a severe punishment for a ripe tangelo. But if that's what they wanted, that's what they would get. So there's an episode of *Salute Your Shorts* where the kids sneak out . . . for *fruit*.

MARY HARRINGTON: Every once in a while, we'd have a chat with Standards about things when it came to *Rugrats* and the way the babies said some words incorrectly. If the characters were older, it

certainly would have been a problem. But a nine-year-old watching *Rugrats* knows that what the babies are saying is wrong because they're babies and therefore won't really emulate it.

E. G. DAILY: On *Rugrats*, we were just trying to stay true to the authenticity of what a child really does. Kids just naturally *can't* say words correctly right away; they haven't learned to.

GEOFFREY DARBY: Am I worried about Bugs Bunny's cross-dressing causing two generations of cross-dressers? No. It's a cartoon. We had a group of psychologists and all this stuff, and they're the ones who actually said to us, "It's a cartoon. At the age of two, they know the difference."

MELANIE CHARTOFF: There was a charity event I was asked to speak at as Didi from *Rugrats* to a group of parents and kids. Big mistake. After I did my little spiel, the officiator asked if there were any questions from the audience. One bewildered little boy raised his hand and said, "But how do you color yourself in?" It was beyond my ability to explain, so I deferred to one of the animators, who broke that child's world in half. Kid was crying and everything. He's probably still discussing it in therapy. Until they're six or seven, children can't tell what's real or not real in their worlds. Santa seems logical; puppets and cartoons are just another kind of creature, like dogs.

CHRIS VISCARDI: I don't think we ever thought too much about if we were going too far. If we ever did go too far, the network would certainly tell us. At the time, Nickelodeon had a very pro-kid, comically anti-parent perspective. It was all about a lighthearted defiance Nickelodeon was trumpeting. *This is* our *network. Kids only.*

MIKE KLINGHOFFER: That was sort of a radical theory of ours called "Us vs. Them." The kids against the grown-ups. It's like the Revolutionary War . . . and we were starting the revolution. You could say "Us vs. Them" and it's teenagers versus parents, or twenty-year-olds versus forty-year-olds.

ANDY BAMBERGER: After Debby Beece moved up into the promo department, that's when we had the development of "Us vs. Them." That gave us a theme to go for how to position each show.

SCOTT WEBB: We had a promo that ran that said, "If you catch your parents watching Nickelodeon, send them to their room!" Gerry Laybourne got called out because, "Look, Gerry doesn't want kids and parents to be together." So there came a multiyear discussion about essentially eliminating "Us vs. Them" out of our language. Under Herb Scannell's reign, that shifted to, "Nickelodeon puts kids first."

GEOFFREY DARBY: *You Can't Do That on Television* made Nick "on the side of the child." And that was all Roger Price. Absolutely. "Television on the side of the child." It wasn't anti-adult. It was pro-kid.

MIKE KLINGHOFFER: Nick was just a quote-unquote "very free" place where we were experimenting and allowing ourselves to be kids again, to try to get in the minds of what our audience was thinking.

HOWARD BAKER: When we won the Emmy on the first season of *Rugrats*, we had a small dinner with Gerry Laybourne. It was Nick's and I think Viacom's first Emmy, so she wanted to meet us. She played a joke on Norton Virgien where she told him the cream pie had heat coming off of it, and when he held his hand over it to feel the heat, she slapped it and his hand went into the cream. I thought, "This is the head of a children's network, all right."

STEVE VIKSTEN: When Craig Bartlett and I created *Hey Arnold!*, we named Helga's character after Gerry in homage: Helga Geraldine.

SCOTT WEBB: Since the core idea we hit on as a team was that it's tough to be a kid in a grown-up world, one of the first things we did was look at *ourselves* as kids. We were all misfits and misunderstood and all those things.

DEE LADUKE: I was a misfit youth, believe me. I was a misfit of a misfit. And we were all kids at Nick! There wasn't a one of us who had grown up yet. We still thought of ourselves as eight, nine, ten years old. A lot of us were extending our adolescence because maybe we weren't too good at being kids the first time around, either because we were misfits like me or . . . I don't know. But we were really going to make up for whatever we lost in childhood right there at Nick.

MIKE KLINGHOFFER: I was Vice President of Production at Nickelodeon . . . and I didn't have an office! That doesn't happen today. I didn't have an office, I didn't have a phone. I sort of ran around and hung out in other people's offices. And they would track me down. That was sort of the fun, the attitude we had.

DANA CALDERWOOD: You'd be sitting in a serious meeting, but you're wearing a goofy pith helmet with a dinosaur glued to the top of it. Or you were sitting on a goofy prop like a huge Chinese restaurant to-go box. And that was part of the fun. Someone would come in wearing a stupid thing, and you would just assume they were testing something.

FRED SEIBERT: In my first meeting with Gerry, I told her that even though Alan and I didn't know what we were doing, what we *could* guarantee her was that by the time we were done, *everybody* at the

network would be having a good time. “And those two really uptight assistants that are sitting out there at their desks in their little jackets and ties”—mainly women, by the way—“are going to be dancing with their dresses over their heads! And the men are going to be shooting spitballs at each other! Does that translate into ratings? We sure hope so!”

GEOFFREY DARBY: It was not inmates running the asylum with the asylum not caring about the rest of the world. We took it very, very seriously. That’s why we got all the PhD types to help us. “Is this okay? Are we screwing people’s kids up? Are we screwing up people’s lives?” We took that trust very seriously.

ALAN GOODMAN: I can’t tell you whether people were crazy, but I can tell you there were a lot of really spirited young people who had never worked in TV before.

VANESSA COFFEY: I don’t think I went crazy. I *know* I didn’t go crazy. No matter what anybody else thinks. But the bottom line is that the entire Nicktoons block and the success of the block was on my shoulders. Nick had money riding on it, but *I* was responsible for it working or not. That’s pretty stressful. And I had Arlene Klasky and Gabor Csupo getting a divorce and fighting and John Kricfalusi freaking out and dealing with Bob Camp and his people. Jim Jinkins was great, but he was feeling left out a little . . . and getting *Rocko’s Modern Life* going—Joe Murphy’s wife committed suicide during the pilot phase. I didn’t take a vacation for five years. One reason I left Nick was that it practically killed me. It was so hard. There was a lot at stake, and we were trying to be totally different. We wanted to win. It’s not easy winning on that level.

LINDA SIMENSKY: We all were in the trenches together trying to make this new and amazing thing work out. If we did it right, it would be really great and affect people’s lives. And that was a lot of pressure. We felt the future of TV animation was in our hands. That’s more than a little stress.

EDDIE FITZGERALD: Our era’s too sensitive. These were good people who were incredibly stressed because they were doing something that had never been done before. And there were lots of obstacles. And they had high standards for themselves. To them, it was a daily battle to meet those high standards.

FRED SEIBERT: No one knew how to deal with the lunatics. And don’t go thinking the lunatics *now* are any less lunaticky.

KELLY BROWN: To be rolling around in the mud with Geoffrey Darby—

the VP of Nick—while we were doing *Hey Dude* was just *such* a fun experience. Speedway was the name of the road we lived on.

FRED KELLER: There wasn't a lot of money in doing *Hey Dude*, but the ride to the desert studio was worth it—this wonderful road at five in the morning, and we'd literally see bobcats crossing the road, herds of deer . . .

GEOFFREY DARBY: We never *crashed* the car. We didn't go off the road. We never went off the road! That's a myth! No, no, no, no, no! Those humps in the road, you could hit a speed where you could get all four wheels off the ground. That's all. And then when you land, it *lands*! Right? You're going eighty miles per hour and you're in a Buick or something stupid—an Oldsmobile or something—and it lands. *Crash!* We never went off the road. But every time it lands, it might as well *be* a crash.

GRAHAM YOST: Geoff wasn't the only one who did this. Dave Brisbin and I found that when you're driving along the speedway and the road dips down into the wash and comes back up, if you hit those at sixty miles per hour, your wheels would leave the ground. I'd never done that in a car before, and it's a very strange sensation to be in the air—a half-second of float—and when the wheels hit the pavement, there's a screech. As soon as they leave the pavement, the drive wheels start spinning really fast because they don't have the friction of the ground. It's like an airplane landing, in a way. It was pretty cool, but Geoff hit it too fast. They survived but got banged around.

CHRISTINE TAYLOR: I knew about that, but I wasn't involved. It was just hilarious and high drama at the time.

GEOFFREY DARBY: There was one vehicle that was a hatchback and—they're all making myths here; they really love this myth-making thing because it makes it sound much more exciting—there was someone who was in the hatch when we landed. We *did* break a mirror. It was scary and fun. Like roller coasters. It *is* very exciting to get all four wheels off the ground. Try it sometime. That road is probably still there. It was a rental car.

HEATHER SHEFFIELD: We were a rowdy crew at *Roundhouse* in that sense. By the time we were in LA, we were on the same stage where *Gilligan's Island* had been shot, so there was a lagoon out back—a two-foot pond—and all the boys had pellet guns. We'd burn things, jump over things with our bikes, just make messes. I brought my puppy to swim in the lagoon. I'm sure *Seinfeld* was not happy to be located right next to these twenty-year-olds blowing things up.

ALAN GOODMAN: There was one scene on *Clarissa* where Ferguson was a baby, and we cut to Jason's head in a baby carriage with a doll's body under his head and he's got a bonnet and he's wailing or whatever. The head from that baby wound up in the writer's room where I had one of those Japanese flying saucer toys where we could flip the switch and it would move around the room. I was able to get the baby doll head onto the top of that flying saucer, and from then on, we called that Baby Head for when we wanted to freak people out. There was one time our producer, Chris Gifford, came in and we didn't want him in the room because we were the writers and he wasn't. And he had some question and we pretended not to care and I said, "I don't know the answer. Let's ask Baby Head." So I went over and switched on the Baby Head toy and it moved around the room for a little while and Suzanne Collins and Doug Petrie and I all stared at it like we were waiting for it to deliver an answer and Chris just kind of backed out of the room a little frightened.

FRED NEWMAN: Doug Preis on *Doug* would bring in a rubbery plastic little bladder that would go *pbbbhhttthhbbth* like a fart machine. He would know it was really stupid, but he would bring it out sometimes and it would break a moment. It was so childish and inappropriate, but he would persist in such a way that it would become so hilarious.

STEVE VIKSTEN: Arlene Klasky came to this one *Rugrats* table reading on April Fools' Day, and we decided we were going to write two fake pages just to fool her. It had to do with Tommy hearing a squeaking noise. He crawled up the stairs, and the squeaky noise got louder and quicker . . . and Tommy pushes open the door and he sees his parents fucking. Stu says, "No, Tommy—it's nothing. Go back!" And Arlene blushed and got really angry. We all burst out laughing. She didn't laugh. But it was fun to pull that on her.

HARVEY: We were in New York, and Marc was really tired after we had shot a lot of shows. There was this old wind-up boatman, and he ended up in every obstacle. Marc was laughing like a schoolgirl; he has this really silly, high laugh.

DANA CALDERWOOD: It was this toy boat that we could wind up and he would row his little boat. Marc just looked at the thing and cracked up.

MARC SUMMERS: We were shooting, at that time, six episodes a day. Sometimes three up-front shows and then three obstacle courses, go to lunch, and then three more up-fronts and three more obstacle courses in a row. By Thursday, I didn't know if I'd given the rules yet or *what* the hell was going on. I got a bit punchy. There's this little character

in a boat and they kept moving it to every obstacle. And I just couldn't stop laughing.

DANA CALDERWOOD: We couldn't stop laughing either, and Mike Klinghoffer—the devil in him—kept running ahead of Marc so that every time he got to the next stop on the obstacle course, there was that stupid little guy in the stupid little boat. I don't think any of us had ever laughed any harder, and Marc could barely get through it.

ALISON FANELLI: Michael Maronna's favorite thing in the world was to get me to laugh during close-ups. We would shoot the scene with the two of us close together, and we'd laugh a lot, and they'd get mad at us. When I was behind the camera delivering lines to Michael during his close-ups, I behaved. When they'd flip it, he would do *anything* to get me to mess up. He'd be making faces, rushing lines . . . he was always a pain in the butt. In a good way. He was *notorious* for that kind of stuff.

BRUCE GOWERS: The art director on *Roundhouse* had a thing about Barbie and would hide a Barbie on the set every week. It would be in the shot, in the background. They were all costumed: Underwater Barbie, Drunk Barbie, Drag Queen Barbie . . . I had no idea this was going on. Who in their right minds would hide Barbies on set?

KELLY BROWN: Whenever we did any dining scene in *Hey Dude*, there'd be a thing of lard on the middle of the table. Just for giggles. That was definitely Graham.

GRAHAM YOST: One time, when Alan was due to visit, Brisbin and I created a "gift basket" that would be waiting for him in his motel room. We even conned some Ramada stickers out of the front desk staff, to make it look like it came from them. The basket was filled with old, near-rotten fruit that was about to be tossed. And lard. Lots of lard. From there, the lard ended up everywhere.

MICHAEL BOWER: There's a rubber chicken in every episode of *Salute Your Shorts* with a cigarette in its mouth. I don't believe it was in *every* episode—depending on editing, it might not have made it into the cut—but it's definitely in a few episodes.

BLAKE SENNETT: Danny was a huge Zappa fan. He introduced *me* to Zappa. There was some Zappa chicken business—a rubber chicken reference on one of those records. So that's where the rubber chicken came from.

VENUS DEMILO: It was more of a crew thing. And people would put clothespins on your shirt.

MARK SCHULTZ: At Nick, we constantly carried fistfuls of clothespins, and when someone wasn't looking, we'd "clip" them. A typical clip job was getting one on somebody's collar.

KEN SCARBOROUGH: The one question I get asked is, "Did you ever put something dirty in there?" Why would I do that? What is the upside of hiding dirty things for children to find in there? In the first place, it's just a gross and weird thing for anybody to do. And secondly, moms are always eagle-eyes and you get those crazy letters from somebody who sees something in the background that isn't there. On Doug's wall, we had a poster that said I "HEART" TOFU because of the song "Killer Tofu." And we got a letter from a mom asking us why Doug had a poster on his wall that said I "HEART" F-U!

CHUCK SWENSON: It wasn't a straight-on shit joke, but there was something they wanted to do on *Rugrats* about an enema once. It was a show called "Grey Gardens," and there were two little old ladies—a play on the documentary of the same name—and one of them thought one of the babies should have a high colonic. Arlene Klasky just thought that was over the kids' heads and inappropriate as well.

MARY HARRINGTON: Vanessa Coffey and I were reviewing a storyboard for *Ren & Stimpy* and it was a holiday episode. There were dingleberries in it. We thought they were *holly* berries. I had *no idea* up to that point what a dingleberry was. I thought it was a Christmas berry. And so did Vanessa! Somebody caught it in Standards.

BOB CAMP: We sometimes got dumb notes from Standards and Practices, but that's normal. On "Prehistoric Stimpy," we got a note to please remove the marijuana plants from the backgrounds. They were ferns. I called the head of the network and asked if the Standards lady was retarded.

BILLY WEST: There were people at Standards and Practices who would see these bikini-clad babes that were drawn and someone there said, "Why does it always have to be women in bathing suits?" So whenever the situation would present itself, the artists drew men. Big, model-looking men with abnormally muscled bodies and bow ties like Chippendales dancers. And then those same Standards and Practices people came out of their coma when they realized what the animators were making fun of.

GERRY LAYBOURNE: Animators are not saints. Go to any animation studio —Disney or anyplace—and they all have sacrilegious and nasty things up.

MELANIE CHARTOFF: What a different world it was one floor away from

the writers and actors. There were all these young artists making faces at themselves in the mirror, trying to capture accurate muscle moves as they drew our characters. I was invited into the men's room to see the S&M drawings of Didi inside all the stalls. They had her decked out in leather, with whips and chains: the whole dominatrix regalia. Shocking!

TIM LAGASSE: Because you're so restricted to what you can say and do on a kids' show, the outtake reels are . . . *filthy*. *Sesame Street*, *The Electric Company*, *Between the Lions*. They're reels I can't show *anyone*! I'll bring them out at a party and go, "I will play this *once*. You cannot have a copy, and I will *never* play it again. Pay attention." Puppets beating each other up with baseball bats, puppets fucking, Big Bird's filthy swearing at people . . . You have to do those kinds of things to get it out of your system.

BECCA LISH: The thing about recording a cartoon is that you can't control which of the many things you do will end up in the final product, so you just do stuff and trust the editing process. Generally, in recording Judy or any of the characters I played on *Doug*, I would do a few takes "as written" and then take some liberties, throwing in an improvisational handle before or after the written line. If we kept doing more and more takes, I might stray further afield. There was certainly more adult stuff that came out in improvisation, but I don't recall ever being told not to say anything.

MELANIE CHARTOFF: We were all keen improvisers at *Rugrats* and had to make up our own "walla"—or ambient crowd noise—a lot. Michael Bell and Charlie Adler, one of our directors, could get pretty inventive and *blue beyond belief* . . .

BECCA LISH: We could be a bit silly knowing that nobody listening would really be able to understand what was being said.

ALAN GOODMAN: We never thought about what we were doing as being for kids. We always thought of it as being something we were doing for us, to amuse us, to entertain us, but that was filtered through the parameters of making kids understand. But that didn't stop us from doing the kinds of things we wanted to do.

HARVEY: Alan Silberberg was the main writer for most of *Double Dare*'s run, and a lot of the time, his stuff was just way over the kids' heads. But the kids knew these grown-ups were having fun for some reason and so that might be amusing to them. We amused *ourselves*, and in so doing, I think we amused the kids audience as well. And probably some parents, too, who were watching at the time.

JOHN CRANE: In the second episode, we did a song called "Sex Education." We thought it was really funny, and the music was good. It just didn't cross our minds that it might be something kids shouldn't be watching.

NORTON VIRGIEN: We did a bold episode called "Naked Tommy" where the babies decided nudity was fun. Obviously, we staged it very carefully and kept it tasteful. My family had Maurice Sendak's *In the Night Kitchen* at home, and in that book, the naked boy character was, well, naked. Tastefully so. I did a sketch of Tommy with small private parts showing that I felt we could use in one or two long shots without offending. The sketch was sent off to Nickelodeon and came back with a one-sentence reply: *Has Norton lost his mind?* Can't really blame them for that one.

DAMIAN YOUNG: With the Bus Driver Stu character on *Pete & Pete*, he couldn't get too dark, which is where I wanted to go with him. He couldn't get too existential, suicidal. There had to be something maniacal about him, but they kept telling me, "Let's make it a character you can actually believe in, as crazy as he is. He can't be doom and gloom all the time. There have to be moments where he gets excited and trusts the kids, and then gets betrayed." I wanted to go *way* over the top . . . to the point of personal self-injury. That's the stuff they had to rein me in on.

CRAIG PRYCE: In "The Tale of the Mystical Mirror" we had a shot where the actress is looking at the mirror and you know she looks beautiful and young, but then we do a sweep pan without cutting and it's an old lady standing there, which is her true image. Her eyes turn all blue and she starts screaming. I cut a bit early because they wanted to be on her too long, but it's in the show and I'm sure it bothered some people. It was kinda cool, though.

RON OLIVER: The tendency with the Sardo character was to go way over the top. I always fancied that Sardo was sort of like Norma Desmond in *Sunset Boulevard*. But the over-the-top campy stuff was like a veil that he kept over himself in order to keep us from knowing just how nasty he really was.

RICHARD M. DUMONT: There were auditions in Montreal for a new series called *Are You Afraid of the Dark?* and I auditioned for the part of Sardo. At that time, my hair was a bit longer, so I tied it back into a small ponytail and tucked it under. I went in there and they said, "This character is supposed to be big and grandiose. We want something 'burlesque-y.'" That was not how I was going to approach the character at all, but I changed things instantly. I took my hair out

of the ponytail, and they said, “Yeah, yeah. Great. Great.” They seemed to like it, I kind of put on a mid-Atlantic accent, and there you go.

RON OLIVER: The funny part is that he played Sardo like a great cameo queen, but Richard’s a married guy with four kids.

KIRK BAILY: I probably made Ug bigger and broader because I was trying to fill the scene, make the scene move, keep it from being static. It was tough to be with four or seven kids in a scene and there’s no interaction while they’re just making sure to hit their beats.

JAMES BETHEA: It *sounds* like fun being a contestant on a game show . . . until you’ve got the shirt on, and you’re standing in front of the lights of the podium, and some guy is talking to you, and you gotta keep track of the game, and all this stuff in your head . . .

PHIL MOORE: I was trying to do what I could to keep kids in Relaxed Mode. If they saw *me* being crazy, nothing *they* could do would embarrass them. Yeah, that crossed the line sometimes. But I was looking at a kid who was about to soil his pants.

BARRY LATHER: There were times when I knew I couldn’t push the choreography and get too provocative because it’s a kids’ show. I wouldn’t want to do anything that was too raunchy or that would make people wonder why it was on the show. We were on the lookout, but I knew how far too push it. We knew who our audience was.

RITA HESTER: We skewed higher demographically. They didn’t market past eleven-year-olds, and they stayed on us: “Your material is a little too sophisticated.” We’d have to reel it in. It was a hard fit. In hindsight, they were fabulous to allow us to do such out-there things and forge new territory.

GERRY LAYBOURNE: We knew about all the conventional wisdom that kids want to aspire to older people and blah-blah-blah, but we didn’t really pay that much attention to that. The shows *had* to be really oriented to a ten-year-old I would say from ’85 on. And we had to protect little kids from our ten-year-old shows, so we created Nick Jr. and we created Face. That helped us to have a kind of safe zone for little kids that wasn’t so cloyingly sweet that older kids couldn’t watch the stuff and dip in and out.

JOHN BINKLEY: After Nick decided to go with my show, they said they were “tapping out” at about age twelve. “If your show could bring in a few thirteen-year-olds or maybe a couple of fourteen-year-olds, we’d

be thrilled." Of course, I didn't think it would appeal to anyone older, because I've learned in this business that kids like to look *up* at the age they're watching. After it had been on for a year, though, Nielsens revealed that one-third of the audience was two to eleven, one-third was twelve to seventeen, and one-third was eighteen to fifty. I would not have predicted that a show designed for children on a children's channel would somehow cross over and draw a family audience.

BENNY HESTER: Our core audience was in touch with pop culture, so it didn't matter what age they were. We were interested in the young kids, but we thought it'd be great for young parents, too. I didn't temper the music at all. We weren't interested in children's music like the Wiggles or something like that. We wanted music that suited the show.

MARC SUMMERS: Keep in mind, I was this thirty-four-year-old guy with a strange sense of humor and frame of reference. The parents would stop me every day and say, "I watch every day for that one joke you do for *me*." I would be doing impressions of Henry Fonda, for godsakes. A kid doesn't know who Henry Fonda is. But parents do. It was sort of like *Rocky & Bullwinkle*. It would work on two levels.

GERRY LAYBOURNE: There was so much going on that was so positive for kids that every now and then when Marc would say something slightly inappropriate, it wasn't ever *that* bad. They didn't notice his corny jokes because they were too excited about what was coming.

VANESSA COFFEY: We did a lot of that with *Rugrats*. Stuff that was over the kids' heads. It was intentional. We didn't want to just have kids watch it. *We* wanted to watch it. We wanted it to be more of a crossover. And it did cross over. It got the first 4.0 rating in cable history.

MIKE KLINGHOFFER: What makes a hit not just at Nickelodeon but on any of these networks is when a show reaches out of its demographic.

JOE O'CONNOR: I'd go out walking around the Universal lot and these people in their twenties would get all excited when they recognized me. Because they looked a little young to have children, I'd ask, "Oh, you have kids?" And they would say, "No, *we* watch the show!" Which I found a little odd. I mean, the show was for little kids: eight-, nine-, ten-year-olds.

RICK GOMEZ: *Pete & Pete* had two fans: ten-year-old kids and college students who were stoned out of their minds, which is what I was. I'd go to a club to see Blues Traveler: *Dude! It's Endless Mike!* Fucking stoned college kids.

DIZ MCNALLY: The killer part was *Out of Control* was on two times out here. Saturdays at four thirty in the afternoon, then four thirty in the morning. And friends of mine who would be out having a few drinks would come in and see me on the TV going *Eee-ooo-ee! Ahoy, mateys!* And it was, "Oh my God! I just saw her down at the club!"

MARTY SCHIFF: There were some fraternities that would stay up and party, and because *Out of Control* was on at four a.m., there was a drinking game where every time Hern laughed, they did a shot. There was an underground movement for cable very similar to what happened with viral videos on the Internet.

ROBIN RUSSO: *Double Dare* was huge with the frat and sorority groups. It wasn't just kids watching the show. It got cultish.

JANEANE GAROFALO: *Pete & Pete* reminded me of things that had been done at the Children's Television Workshop in the seventies and sixties, like *The Electric Company*. It sort of transcended age. Sometimes these shows—even *The Monkees* or the original *Batman*—have a quality that appeals to both children and adults. I assume it appealed to other adults, too, because I know I had friends who watched it as well.

CHARLES S. DUTTON: I had a lot of friends who were adults who were hooked on *Are You Afraid of the Dark?* And I knew a lot of actors who would have loved to have been on that show.

MITCHELL KRIEGMAN: *Ren & Stimpy* skewed the network, because it wasn't just a hit; it was a phenomenon. When a phenomenon happens, it takes the network with it. Thereafter, it became clear we had a college audience.

MICHELLE TRACHTENBERG: It wasn't like they were sticking little shy kids in and saying, "Hey, go crazy." I was already very opinionated and well-read. Taking, like, *Anna Karenina* to set and being like, "I'm gonna read this!" and having absolutely no idea what any of the words I was reading were. *That* kind of kid.

BOB BLACK: When you're a kid, there's a certain glee you take in doing something outrageous or over the top. If we wrote a Barth's sketch that was particularly gross or a particularly nasty firing squad bit, they would actually *want* to be in that rather than saying, "That's pretty extreme . . ."

MICHAEL SPILLER: There were things that Little Pete did that pushed the envelope and you would hope an impressionable ten-year-old wouldn't mimic that behavior. One day, someone said something in

front of Danny Tamberelli and I said, “You’re not allowed to do that. That’s a SAG rule. If you curse in front of a child, you’re fined five dollars.” And I had a bunch of people believing it was a rule. Danny bought it hook, line, and sinker. We got to the point where someone would say something and Danny would say, “Don’t worry, I’m not going to report you.” This tradition carried on; it’s another tradition the show gave birth to!

WILL MCROBB: It was a very square show masquerading as a hip show. The values were really like “love your brother” and “be good to people” and “honor your imagination.” There was some subversive behavior like staying up for eleven nights in a row, but if you remember the end of that episode, Pete and Mom are closer than ever and respect each other’s boundaries. We really honored the rituals of childhood. Maybe “square” isn’t the right word . . .

TOBY HUSS: The most subversive thing about *Pete & Pete* will always be the people who all got together to make it. We’re all a little like that. It’s hard to explain. It was a little shimmering time back then. We’d look at each other saying, “Is this going to work? Are they going to let us do this?” I don’t think it’d be made today.

WILL MCROBB: As soon as you start testing stuff, that’s where the problems start. *Pete & Pete* never got tested. When things get tested, that tends to lead to an outcome that is more mainstream than what you originally intended.

PAUL GERMAIN: Nick was really into focus groups. Everyone in animation still does that. It’s a load of bunk. They’d send us research and we looked at it, but that was about it. After we went through the initial process of testing the pilot and we got great numbers, it was never really an issue for us.

GEOFFREY DARBY: I don’t think we should listen to market research that says little girls love princesses and mermaids, so let’s do a show about mermaid princesses. That’s the *opposite* of what we should be doing.

BOB KLEIN: Keep in mind, these were some of the first children’s focus groups ever done.

GERRY LAYBOURNE: My background was in research, and it basically taught me that if you talk to even two kids, you’re better off than if you go blind. So I immediately set up a focus group for *You Can’t Do That on Television*, and it taught me a lot about focus groups. This focus group leader *hated* the show. She thought it was disrespectful and hideous. So when I arrived at the focus group, she said, “Well, I’ll do the best I can, but it’s a terrible show.” Everything she did with the

kids in the room was to get them to say negative things. And we came back with a very negative report because one of the kids was kind of a bully and it wasn't cool enough for him. So then all the kids heaped on. But they knew every character and they knew every line of dialogue. And I knew they loved the show but they just weren't saying it. You have to talk with kids one-on-one about it because of peer pressure. So that was very helpful. Every single thing we did was a learning experience, and the great thing was nobody was watching us.

ROGER PRICE: One day, I got a very nasty letter from lawyers representing the newly released *Ghostbusters* movie, saying that I had stolen the idea of green slime and must cease immediately from further use of it or they would take action. I wrote back pointing out that their movie was released in 1984 and we had been dumping green slime on kids since 1979; so the opposite was the case, and they must have stolen the idea from *us*. I heard no more about it. But it was interesting that some lawyers did believe that a creator could have proprietary rights to green slime.

ALAN GOODMAN: Slime, for Roger Price, was a way for kids to "act up" to adults. To punish them for the crime of being parents. But it evolved when it became the symbol of Nickelodeon. As a symbol of the demarcation between grown-ups and kids, getting slimed became a badge of honor. Sliming Tom Cruise at the Kids' Choice Awards was a way of saying, "We accept you. You're one of us."

ALBIE HECHT: In 1994, we moved the Kids' Choice Awards to the Pantages Theatre, and the conceit was we would start it out as a very austere and serious event that gets busted up by slime and chaos. In my mind, there was only one person big enough to pull that off, and that was James Earl Jones. With his voice and the theater, you can *see* it. So I get on the phone with him—he's like a hero to me—and he goes, "HELLO, ALBIE." That *voice* comes on and I'm like, *Oh my God, it's James Earl Jones*. I pitch him the idea of doing the show, being in a tuxedo and getting slimed; it's gonna be great—kids all over the world . . . And there's silence. At this point in my career, I know silence is not good. And he goes, "Albie, I don't think so. Thank you for your time." And he hangs up. I'm crushed. I don't know what to do; it's sort of been written for him . . . Two minutes later, the phone rings: "ALBIE? JAMES EARL JONES." What did I do? I must have done something wrong! He says he just talked with his granddaughters and they said that he *must* do it because sliming is the biggest honor he could have.

ALAN GOODMAN: When we started to build our tone, our look, our sound, our style, we went against the grain of what was normal because we didn't see a lot of value with normal. We really didn't have the money to do anything else. So we had to have our own point of view.

MIKE KLINGHOFFER: One of the bugaboos that we were fighting was that cable shows had a *look*. That "public access look." That nonprofessional, nonnetwork look. When we were trying to establish who we were, production value became very, very important for us. It couldn't look cheap or like a "little kids' version."

LARRY SULKIS: There was no money for gloss. Man, this was about as close to "I've got some costumes in the garage, let's put on a show" as you could get. And it definitely looked that way. But that added to the fun of it!

DAN SAWYER: It seemed low-budget. Or revolutionary.

KATHERINE DIECKMANN: Improvisational, DIY, punk was very much our aesthetic. We're just going to take these kids and go to some suburbs in Jersey and *shoot it, man!*

BYRON TAYLOR: Everything at Nickelodeon turned out to have a major learning curve involved with it. Over the first five or six years, it developed quite a bit.

SCOTT WEBB: There are two people who are gone who really should be counted along with Fred Seibert here. One is Tom Pomposello, who helped us come up with our sound identity with the doo-wop, which helped us communicate a lot of our attitude and was the foundation for a lot of our animation identity as well.

GEOFFREY DARBY: That's why Tom was important in those days—and this is because I married an audio engineer: Sound is really important

on television, especially back then.

SCOTT WEBB: The other person is Tom Corey, who designed the Nickelodeon logo. Tom Corey really understood these ideas about designing a logo that could be as expressive as kids were and as flexible a design that we could keep fresh. There are rules for the logo. But the logo is an ever-changing orange shape. It could really be anything, as long as it fit within some basic design rules.

GEORGE EVELYN: Each Nick logo was something different. A graphic shape, no outlines, usually. A flat, bright orange bone or hat or whatever.

SCOTT WEBB: Whenever we put it on air, we always wanted to make it like a big sticker and kind of in your face. Lime green and orange were the two colors that Tom Corey proposed, because they are both international distress colors. They're attention-getting. Designers always want to change what they're working with. Like, whatever the last guy did was a piece of shit.

ALAN GOODMAN: The flat orange-colored logo was deliberate, and the idea was it literally slaps on, basically obliterating the end of the scene and saying it's our brand. The original idea was it was just an orange thing, but it had to be something that wouldn't be orange in real life. So it couldn't be an orange, for instance.

GEORGE EVELYN: We directors and designers would sit around, sifting through the logo branding spec sheets, and pick our favorites, sort of divvying up the pile. Nick's mission was "have fun" and have the logo at the end. And "we like orange." Other than that, it was pretty open.

JOEY AHLBUM: When I got the audio track for what would become the first dinosaur ID, I was trying to come up with ideas and a good friend said "kids love dinosaurs." I started drawing and came up with the sneaker-wearing doo-wop dinos. And then I gave them an irreverent Nickelodeon twist. They were wearing sneakers, they were mixed with modern technology—watching TV, listening to a Walkman, and even driving cars. They were also done in bright, poppy colors, all with that amazing doo-wop track. It added up to pure magic and pure Nickelodeon.

MIKE KLINGHOFFER: Up to about 1985, Nickelodeon really had almost no original productions. So everything, every attitude we had, had to come across in basic thirty-second blasts through our on-air promotions.

CHRIS VISCARDI: What was great about Nickelodeon at that time—

particularly working in On-Air Promotions—was it didn't have a lot of original programming. So pretty much all the money they had went into interstitial programming. Even though we were making promos —"*Mister Ed* will be right back after these messages"—we also got to do other interstitial programming that was animated or allowed us to do film shoots and all these post-production effects. It was like going to film school all over again.

SCOTT WEBB: The promo department was a great incubator for Will McRobb to really find himself. He was unbearably shy when he showed up in the early days, and the environment in which we were working really allowed him to open up and share his work more to others.

WILL MCROBB: As golden as that golden age might have been, I really don't think *Pete & Pete* would have been made into a series except for the fact that it came out of the promo department. It all came out of Scott Webb's department, and he had the autonomy to make the sixty-second spots that caught on the way *The Simpsons* caught on with *its* shorts.

JOE STILLMAN: Scott was really the keeper of the flame and kind of embodied a grown-up kid at Nickelodeon. He really kind of emotionally and spiritually kept Nickelodeon on track.

SCOTT WEBB: I was twenty-eight at the time, maybe twenty-nine. In the early days, my approach really resonated, and that's one of the reasons I became the promo producer I did, then the creative director I did. People would say my blood was orange.

WILL MCROBB: Scott really bled orange. He was the truest of the true believers. He could handle it all from a purely creative and from an advertising point of view. Sadly, Scott is legally blind. But that only added to his mystique. We had to sit really close to him. Scott had a guru persona.

SCOTT WEBB: I had become a freelancer for Fred Seibert at the Movie Channel. And shortly after I got there, I began to have a problem with my eyesight. I thought I just needed glasses, but I went to a doctor and learned fairly quickly that it was not correctable. It was a problem with my optic nerve. When I got that news, I sort of felt like my life was over. I couldn't imagine how I could ever be a functioning production assistant. I couldn't read, I couldn't drive. I didn't know how I would ever produce television, and I felt like my life was over. The day I got that news, I went to Fred and did everything but say the words, "I quit." I went and I told him that I had a problem and I didn't

know how I was going to be able to do anything. And so he said to me, "You have a lot of problems: You're really lazy and you're disorganized. You're irresponsible. And I expect you to go back to your desk and get to work. And if you have trouble with your eyes, you should let me know." Fred did some heroic things for me in those days in the way he stuck his neck out. This was way, way, *way* before the Americans with Disabilities Act. And Fred made sure that I got some really wacky equipment to help me do what I needed to do. To have somebody step in to say that he believed in me at a time when I didn't believe in myself was a huge turning point for me in my life. I really felt at that moment that I wanted to dedicate my work to kind of prove that Fred did the right thing. Losing my eyesight was a really dark period in my life, and it was a dark journey. But I figured out how to be a producer as a visually impaired person.

GEOFFREY DARBY: Scott was a producer. He wasn't running it all. Debby Beece was running it.

JOE STILLMAN: In fairness, the essence of what Nickelodeon became was something that also came from Fred/Alan. They really focused on what makes Nickelodeon Nickelodeon. Why we weren't Disney. That kind of stuff.

FRED SEIBERT: We started as promotion consultants and eventually became programming consultants, then a full-service ad agency for Nick. From their standpoint, we were rock-and-roll guys. We were hired to solve a problem. Nick had no ratings; what could we do that people hadn't done before us? We had a lot of theory, but we needed executional proof, and Scott Webb was the *lead* of executional proof.

WILL MCROBB: All the years that I'd been in the promo department really felt like we were an underdog team of commandos trying to do something that was good, and everything that *Pete & Pete* became was really fueled by that same identity.

CHRIS VISCARDI: I'm sure there was a little bit of jealousy about our getting a chance to do that. We eventually broke off from the On-Air Promos Department and kind of went freelance to make *Pete & Pete*.

BYRON TAYLOR: The design of *Double Dare* was inspired by an Italian movement from the 1980s called "Memphis." There was a design firm that did all these crazy pieces of furniture, and they eventually got into architecture design. It had kind of a post-punk feel to it, perhaps. Other things were Rube Goldberg and the game Mouse Trap.

DAVID ELLIS: Byron had an interesting approach to color and line design that hadn't really been used or exploited at all. He was a genius in his

approach to what Nick was all about. It was imaginative and new.

BYRON TAYLOR: If you look at weapons G.I. Joe toys have, they look like they are from World War II but are stripped of detail because of the scale. That "toy-ness" was something I always wanted to go after in designing obstacles as well as props for the stunts. That's my aesthetic criteria.

ALBIE HECHT: Oh, Byron's *amazing*. He's in the DNA of Nick.

BYRON TAYLOR: Jim Fenhagen had already designed the *Double Dare* set—completely established the look. But they still had the obstacle courses that needed to be designed. All of that stuff, we had to determine what it would look like. And my work at Nickelodeon sort of snowballed from there.

HARVEY: If you saw Byron outside, you might have thought he was, like, a pharmacist or maybe a librarian. Then he'd come up with these ingenious, almost perverted sort of torturous kinds of things: "We'll make 'em reach up into this giant nose" or "We'll send 'em down this slide and have them land in this mess." There was always a fine line between its being real torture and just torturous fun.

BYRON TAYLOR: Very few strictures were placed on us.

DANA CALDERWOOD: I liked the Sundae Slide because that was always fun to shoot, with kids coming down headfirst or slipping and landing: We were guaranteed to get a big, wonderful shot and splash at the bottom of the slide.

BYRON TAYLOR: I was probably the first person to go down into the Gumball Machine. It's very exciting to be inside. There's usually a frown on my face, and I wound up coming out with a smile.

DANA CALDERWOOD: That's the type of stuff I would do on my lunch hour: play on the hamster wheel. Just the idea of a one-ton human hamster wheel was so clever.

HARVEY: Byron was such a bizarre, creative guy. It was like this sort of weird Santa's Workshop—the giant hamster wheels and huge nose that blew snot out and all this stuff Byron created with his team.

BOB MITTENTHAL: *Double Dare* was a pretty smart set design. It was really designed to look like a bathroom. The glass brick walls, the tile-esque floors . . .

BYRON TAYLOR: Jim Fenhagen had designed a very beautiful set that the producers had imagined as a swimming pool. Bob Mittenthal describes

it as a bathroom. Geoffrey Darby described it as a natatorium. That's sort of his pretentious explanation, which is apt.

GEOFFREY DARBY: They weren't the boss, so they can use all the terms they want, but I gave the direction and I said I want it to be a natatorium, which is what caused those tiles. "Bathroom" never entered my mind. Why "natatorium"? Because I liked the word.

ALAN SILBERBERG: There's something about appealing to the kid audience that a stunt had to be both fun and not too dangerous but still challenging. We would sit around at dinner—because, you know, a lot of us were living in hotels and going out to dinner all the time—and throw ideas around that way. At one point, there was a Writers Guild strike, and since we were not a guild show, we hired some of David Letterman's writers to see if they could come up with some stunts. And they did *not* work. Beyond the obvious, there were some things that came in from that group that were extremely conceptual and just . . . didn't work.

GERRY LAYBOURNE: During the very first taping, the kid gets to the first obstacle and it's a flag in a bag of feathers . . . And the kid spends the entire sixty seconds trying to get the flag. It was the only obstacle they hadn't tested. So they then had to spend an hour cleaning the feathers and goop. The second time around, the camera fell back into the French toast or whatever and we had to start again. We needed to do *four shows a day* to make this work, and we're now into hour five of taping this *one* show. I go home. I'm just like, "Oh God, this is the worst thing. It's never going to work. We're dead." I'm on the phone with Debby Beece, who says to me, "Don't worry, Geoffrey will figure this out by Monday."

DONNIE JEFFCOAT: *Double Dare* was in a studio. *GUTS* was in a studio. *Nick Arcade* was in a studio. So it was a real challenge for our production company on *Wild & Crazy Kids*, which was *on location*, to keep it together. We had a lot of organizational issues, and I don't mind saying that. The production company did a pretty good job, but there were some times when they really pushed our hours as young people. It was one of these things where I'd show up and they'd go, "This game is going to work just like this, and this will explode at this time," and it would be a complete, major failure. We'd have to, a lot of times, have backup games planned, which always threw the day off. We shot two shows a week. It was a lot for *everybody*.

FRED KELLER: To go and do a three-camera kids' show in the Arizona desert on location was quite a challenge. We were doing a twenty-two-minute show in about two and a half days. Very tough show to

do, *Hey Dude*.

DAVID LASCHER: I loved the amenities. It was like the Ramada Inn or something. I turned seventeen, and it was my first bit of *freedom*. We became really close friends: Christine Taylor, Kelly Brown, Joe Torres, director Ross Bagwell . . . We were really tight.

GRAHAM YOST: The production moved from the Ramada to the sumptuous Radisson. The thing about the Ramada was that the pool was right there. We had to walk a little further at the Radisson.

FRED KELLER: The first thirteen episodes were very bare-bones. We were staying in the little Holiday Inn on the outskirts of Tucson, and we didn't even have a dolly for the camera. By season two, we had the dolly, we were at the Marriott—everything bounced up as the show was more successful.

CHRISTINE TAYLOR: I was not a person who had ever been to the Wild West. I'd never been on a horse. I had no idea what the environment was going to be. I had never even been to the West *Coast* before. I had no idea what the dry heat of the desert was going to be . . . until we got there!

FRED KELLER: One time we put a thermometer on the sound guy's hat; he'd been sitting above the set with his boom, and it was, like, 125 degrees. When we were rehearsing with the kids at the Ramada area, there was a Coca-Cola machine and we kept hearing this rattling sound . . . Son of a gun if there wasn't a *huge* rattlesnake that had gone to cool itself *in* the machine! We had to get a snake wrangler to take it out into the desert because Tanque Verde, where we were shooting, is protected land.

KELLY BROWN: The last day after we wrapped the first season, we all got on the plane, but we had to get off because it was too hot to fly. They shut the airport down.

CHRISTINE TAYLOR: The horseback riding was hard, too. That was another challenge for the suburban Pennsylvania girl that I was.

DANA CALDERWOOD: At night, we would test all of the stunts on *Double Dare*. *Needs to be bigger! Needs more water balloons! It's good, but NOT MESSY ENOUGH!* We had kids—production assistants, mostly—who would do the testing. Or sometimes we would do it ourselves.

TIM BARTELL: Every time they had an idea for a game or something, they'd bring a kid in to test it. I'd call my friends, "Hey, can I borrow your teenage son?"

LISA SHAFTEL: I was the smallest person in the shop where we worked at Showman Fabricators. I'm five-foot-two and at that time was probably 115 pounds. I would get pulled off of whatever I was working on, and they would use me as a guinea pig to go through the obstacles and the props to see if kids could reach, if things were too big or too small. One of the things we built was a very simplified, vertical ant farm that was basically a large plywood box with acrylic, Plexiglas panels on the front side. Inside was a very simplified maze that was a wooden structure covered in industrial carpeting. It was 95 percent finished, and they called me over to test it out. I climbed up inside . . . and the distance back up was too far. I couldn't reach and I got stuck inside it. I had to sit there for a while as the carpenters unscrewed all the Plexiglas panels and got a ladder to get me out. It was kind of like, "You will never believe what happened to me at work today."

BYRON TAYLOR: Basically, we would be *guessing* when we would draw up the designs. It would be complicated by the factors of the mess being put on it and the kids going through it. After putting them in the studio, we would have to rework pieces occasionally.

JAMES BETHEA: What was amazing about our set on *Nick Arcade* was the thing people didn't get to see: the scale. Ten thousand square feet, and half of our soundstage was dedicated to blue-screen sets, full-scale, for the interactive Video Zone at the end of each episode. At one time, we had the largest blue-screen set that had ever been built.

ANDREA LIVELY: Being on that immense set and walking around, seeing what the kids would see on the monitors, then looking at the end result—it was one of those experiences where I went, "Wow, cool!" But I didn't realize how cool it was until I could really look back on it now and see how groundbreaking it was.

KEVIN KUBUSHESKIE: The Link Set on *You Can't Do That on Television* was just supposed to look like monkey bars with a blue sky background where kids might play or hang out.

ROGER PRICE: At the instigation of our designer, John Galt, we lit the Link Set—that strange structure from which the shows were hosted—entirely with fluorescent lighting. That had never been done before, for the simple reason that it was not technically possible. And now we are getting into areas that I barely understand. Apparently, the light from fluorescent tubes strobe at a different speed from the camera shutters, so that while everyone in TV realized that fluorescent lighting would eliminate many other problems, it was not possible to use because there would appear to be a slow pulsing of the picture exposure. John Galt had found a way to synchronize the fluorescents

with the cameras' thirty-frames-per-second shutter speeds, and thus eliminate the slow pulsing of light. The soft and all-over light from the fluorescents allowed the actors more freedom of movement without being rooted to marks or walking along only carefully plotted lines. It also cut out the problems of shadows from boom microphones, which had always been an issue. So a lot of the anarchic freedom we displayed was entirely due to a technical innovation developed and perfected for the show by a man who was one of the many undiscovered geniuses in Ottawa. On our pilot, I believe we were also the first in the world to use high-definition video cameras on location or, I think, anywhere. And that was another Galt innovation. He didn't invent them, but he did know about them.

BYRON TAYLOR: How to integrate kids into the Video Zone on *Nick Arcade* was a lot of fun, because they were shot *like* a video game, like with side-scroller and overhead angles.

CURT TOUMANIAN: Some of the games were a lot more interactive than others, like the one where kids would throw a Styrofoam ball at the characters. What we would do is hook the camera up to the Amiga Computer, and when the kids would stand in front of the blue screen, their image would appear and they could interact with certain layers of the computer graphics. We had objects that would fly across the screen. If the kid didn't duck, the computer would detect that as a collision. I'm pretty sure there wasn't anything like that on TV prior to that. And I don't think there's been anything quite like it *since*, either.

MITCHELL KRIEGMAN: When we first came to the set for Clarissa's room, it was done in all pink and was very frilly. Like *most* girls' bedrooms at the time on those kinds of shows. But I had the set designers literally take black car paint and make checkered walls on top of the pink wallpaper. One of the camera guys on the set said, "She's possessed by the Devil!"

DAVID ELLIS: If I had painted checkers on *my* wall at that age, I would have gotten my rear end tanned inside and out. But it was necessary to show that edge of Clarissa's personality and also the liberalness of her parents by having her expressing herself that way.

BYRON TAYLOR: What I pitched was painting *purple* squares. I thought that would look kind of cool, that black would be too stark. But Mitchell informed me he hated purple, so there wasn't going to be any purple on that set.

JOE O'CONNOR: Mitchell hated the color purple.

LISA LEDERER: That was absolutely a rule: We couldn't use purple. At the

very end of the first meeting, Mitchell said there's only one criterion when you go to shop the show: *No purple*. I looked at him and went, "You're kidding, right?" I mean, seriously, I can't dress a teenage girl in purple? It was a very big deal. There could be no purple in his office; there could be no purple on the show. He didn't even like it when people *wore* purple.

GEOFFREY DARBY: I don't remember Mitchell's anti-purple mandate, but I had an anti-green mandate. We couldn't have green walls or people wearing green. One: Green slime doesn't show up very well on green. Two: In the NTSC television system, when you're wearing green, it changes the color of your skin tone. It's math. I had to explain all this stuff!

MITCHELL KRIEGMAN: The anti-purple origin is completely arbitrary and methodical. *Clarissa* is the first big show that I ever ran. And I had this advice from an old pro in the business who said, "The first thing you do when you go down there, come up with something arbitrary that everybody's gotta do and stick to it and never explain it." *Stick to it and never explain it and that way you'll prove that you've got the balls to run the show and they'll all have to just mentally give in to you*. He goes unnamed. So I go down there and it was in the back of my mind, but I knew I had to assert myself. And we're in wardrobe and I actually had an idea about wardrobe, which is that, because I wanted the show to appeal so fervently to girls and boys—which was a big breakthrough —I wanted her to wear pink *and* blue, and that was the balance of her wardrobe. And in the set, I wanted it to be pink and blue. So I decided that purple would ruin that, so I just said, "No purple in the clothes," and then Lisa Lederer would say, "Why?" And I said, "It doesn't matter. No purple." And in the set design I would say, "No purple." And so then it *grew*, right? Inside I was laughing a little bit; it was a weird little thing. And by the way, Lisa snuck in a bunch of purple plenty of times.

BYRON TAYLOR: Of all the people I'd ever worked with up to that point, I'd never had anybody say something as crazy as that. Ultimately, there was an art director who came in to direct the rest of the series; I had very little contact with it after that.

GEOFFREY DARBY: Mitchell taught Byron how to create a sitcom set. Where the staircases go and that kind of thing. Mitchell dragged, kicking and screaming, a lot of the people in Florida into how to make a sitcom.

MARK SCHULTZ: The engineering department had a lot of trouble with Mitchell because they'd break their backs to make something work

and he was very critical. He didn't have any technical knowledge, and yet he treated those people very poorly.

DAVID ELLIS: One alteration I made was that with Sam coming through the window later in the first season, I realized we had to do something more elaborate with the outside of that window. Before, it just looked like the house was sitting on top of a cliff. So we did some model homes outside with some branches and things to give it a little more respectability.

BUDDY SHEFFIELD: Because we had a small budget on *Roundhouse*, we decided to use that to our advantage. The idea was to strip it down to what's essential. We didn't depend on things like scenery or makeup or that kind of thing, because we felt that didn't add a whole lot to the comedy.

BYRON TAYLOR: For whatever reason, they wanted a turntable that would have scenery on it, like a Broadway set that would revolve. It seemed like an interesting conceit, but technically difficult and tremendously expensive. That also ran counter to what they were trying to do. *Roundhouse* was basically going to be like *In Living Color* for the Nickelodeon crowd. It seemed more fun for me to approach it in a scaled-down way, where the sets would be more "schematic." You were always aware of the environment, wherever you were: You were always in the roundhouse, basically. Then there was the aesthetic of dumpster-diving, because those would be laying around in a roundhouse. Not that the set would be made out of junk . . . but that's what it wound up looking like.

BUDDY SHEFFIELD: The original idea was that the set was an abandoned roundhouse that these kids had come to in order to take it over and do a show. I don't know if that ever came across. In the initial opening, we played that out, but later on it wasn't as important.

TIM BARTELL: I pretty much took Byron's design and engineered it and drew it up for the Aggro Crag on *GUTS*. I would say it probably took about twenty people and about one month to build it. One of the challenges was we had to build it in such a way that it could be taken apart, stored, and rebuilt later. So we ended up building a substructure out of speed rail and foam and latex—a lot of foam—and created little areas with that structure here or there that would plop on the mountain. It was the extra "skin" of it. That allowed us to crawl up inside of it and work on the electronics and gags.

MARK SCHULTZ: We had elaborate harnesses of cable on the underside of the *GUTS* mountain that ran all these actuator infrared beams through

activators, much like when you walk into a grocery store and the door opens for you. This would all be run to the MIDI sampler. So if a kid interrupted a laser beam and it triggered a bunch of Styrofoam boulders, I would have an earthquake sound effect that the kid would trigger, and the MIDI sampler would play the effect live on the air.

ALBIE HECHT: Then we did the pilot and we said we're going to have a place that becomes a character in the show. That became the Extreme Arena, which Byron created beautifully. For the endgame, we came up with the biggest challenge we could. Magda Liolis was an athlete, and she hooked up this idea for "crag" and mountain climbing. She came up with that term: *Aggro Crag*. Kids still e-mail Mike O'Malley and me looking for a piece of it!

JAMES BETHEA: The Video Zone answered the question of "couch potato" problems involving kids playing video games on *Nick Arcade*. It was very physical. Watching executives and other adults who would come to try it out was hilarious.

ANDY BAMBERGER: It's very disorienting. If you went left, on the camera you'd be going *right*. What you're viewing is the opposite of what you're doing.

KARIM MITEFF: We had to give kids time to adjust, because it was such a new thing. About one in eight kids didn't get it. They had difficulty with the physicality of it.

ANDREA LIVELY: You had to be really coordinated. We were allowed to do it, but a lot of us felt like such fools because it was tricky and hard.

JAMES BETHEA: Nobody was funnier than Karim, because he would kind of lose himself, grunting and talking to himself and to the objects and the screen. He would take it so seriously, like we had dropped him in a war zone.

HARVEY: On *Double Dare*, the place would be going ape-shit with so many moving parts and a lot of kinetic energy at work, and Dana Calderwood was always so calm. I never saw him flustered. There was something almost like a Zen Yoda character to him.

DANA CALDERWOOD: *Double Dare* was live-to-tape. In other words, it never went into an edit room to piece it together after we shot it. It literally came to thirty minutes exactly. We wouldn't stop for commercial breaks. We would actually lay down two-minutes-and-two-second holes on the videotape, which later became a commercial. When we delivered the show, it was completely done and edited. Occasionally, we would "pick up" or redo a shot, but there wasn't

anything that happened that you didn't see on the show.

BRUCE GOWERS: Because *Roundhouse* was live-to-tape, that's where the speed came in. Obviously, if something went wrong, we'd stop; but it very rarely would. The viewer could watch as the kids were even involved in the scenery changes to make it run faster and more smoothly. *Roundhouse* was totally continuous. There weren't any stopped tapes like there were on so many other comedy shows.

ALAN GOODMAN: *Clarissa* broke a lot of rules in terms of typical sitcom presentations. It wasn't the first series where the actor comes out of the show and talks to the camera, but it was the first one for kids that did that.

SARAH CONDON: Part of what Mitchell was trying to do, honestly, was having some fun with the graphics and the way we shot her. A really "cable" version of a girl show. Like being a little more creative in terms of breaking the fourth wall.

MITCHELL KRIEGMAN: I don't really think about it as "breaking the fourth wall" when characters do it on TV. In my mind, TV doesn't have one at all. When you're watching the news and they're talking to the camera, they're not really breaking the fourth wall. And I loved *Ferris Bueller's Day Off*. So that was definitely an influence. I had specific rules on how she would talk to you like you were in the room with her.

CHUCK VINSON: I spent *hours* talking to Mitchell about how *Clarissa* would break the fourth wall. There was a whole big formula. And it was quite wonderful: Once we got into that formula, we never really stepped over those boundaries.

LISA LEDERER: I was very immersed in the Downtown scene in New York. That whole rock-and-roll punk scene was about redefining the way we looked at what we found attractive and interesting. The people I was hanging out with, we were going out to art shows for Jean-Michel Basquiat and Andy Warhol, and in some ways that informed what I personally did on *Clarissa* in a positive way, because it drew from experiences that other people might not have had. I used to ride the subways, and they were always this great mash-up of kids from different boroughs and different backgrounds, different ethnicities, bringing that whole beautiful panoply of visuals to bear on a train. I paid really close attention to what the kids were wearing. It was visually interesting and somehow familiar . . . yet it didn't look like everything else on TV.

KATHERINE DIECKMANN: From the beginning, *Pete & Pete* was all about

this melancholy and emotionality of childhood as much as it was absurdist. We sort of took that approach to talking about childhood, which was not sentimental and not corny and not obvious. It was more about the strange things that happen in childhood and how truthful those are. Put that into our Downtown New York shared sensibility, and that's really what *Pete & Pete* was.

WILL MCROBB: We really got off on putting together ideas that were on the surreal side of things. The ringing phone episode—that Nickelodeon wasn't too crazy about—was "let's do a story about a phone that nobody ever picked up." Or the summer vacation where nobody knows the identity of the guy who brings them ice cream every year: an emotionally traumatized story about a guy who can't handle intimacy . . .

JOE STILLMAN: Or the idea of finding the same inspector inspecting your clothes throughout your life. We would try to find subject matter that would do two things: be relevant to a kid . . . but with a twist. It wasn't like, "Yeah, you lost your first tooth." It was something you couldn't find anywhere else.

WILL MCROBB: But we never wanted to be weird for weird-sakes. We were always hopeful we could make it organic. And I think coming from a kids' perspective made it easy.

ADAM REID: *You Can't Do That on Television* was a world where the adults were being outsmarted by the kids. The dad was a drunken politician. The mom was a blithering idiot who never took off her dish gloves. The adults were definitely not equal to the kids.

JUSTIN CAMMY: Not only was the dad a drunk, but he was a *politician*! Senator Prevert, which is a takedown on politicians. And Barth's Burger was a critique on the fast-food industry at a time when the organic food and vegetarian movement was spreading. You could go on and on!

JOSH MORRIS: Fart jokes are one thing, but Barth's Burgers is something you wouldn't be able to get away with today. They had jokes about cutting human meat into burgers. That's dark! That's *Sweeney Todd*!

RON OLIVER: There's a really powerful element, the idea of abandonment by one's parents, that we had in "The Tale of the Super Specs." We already had the idea of the "faceless," with those people in black hoods coming toward you, but then we had Sardo being the nice comic foil . . . until he feels like *he's* out of control. He's the only adult, it seems, and even *he's* lost control by the end.

ABBY HAGYARD: Barth, the Principal, Mom and Dad, the Librarian—all the adults were just *weird*. The house was just *weird*. The school, the world they inhabited was *weird*. That's what that show was all about. *Kids are fine; it's the rest of the world that's messed up*.

JOSH MORRIS: It was very fresh—you'd never had a fart joke on kids' TV before. Ever. Dark parents. Dark themes. That's what Roger brought with him from England. And Geoffrey brought it to America, and it was very fresh. What kind of dark parents and dark kids were ever reflected anywhere except for maybe Mark Twain before that? Nothing, but in Britain, it's their fodder for humor.

ROGER PRICE: I assume the Monty Pythons were imprisoned in similar establishments as I when they were younger. You need a quirky sense of humor to survive being British.

CHRISTINE MCGLADE: We got a big kick out of really showing things from a quirky kid's-eye view of the world.

GABOR CSUPO: Nickelodeon wanted something different, something unique. And we were a studio that was known for doing these kinds of things, like when we were doing *The Simpsons* with all the colors in little different ways you hadn't seen before.

VANESSA COFFEY: I had said to Gabor, "I don't want realistic-looking characters. But I don't want them to look like nonhumans either." We went back and forth on design. Arlene Klasky's a graphic designer, but I don't believe she had anything to do with that.

CRAIG BARTLETT: Sure, the design for Angelica's doll Cynthia is kind of scary. But that whole series is kind of scary if you really look at it. Everyone was weird. The designs are extreme. Especially when you consider it arrived on the *cartoon* landscape. The edge we had was when you turned on those shows, they didn't look like anything else that was on TV.

LINDA SIMENSKY: Kids are more open-minded than adults are when it comes to that kind of thing. The joy of the pilot was its unique look that was very Eastern European–looking with a little anime mixed in, and putting that in front of kids.

PETER CHUNG: I was into Japanese animators at the time—Osamu Dezaki, Rintaro, Yoshiaki Kawajiri—and they had made a big impression on me. What I admired about them was they treated animation as filmmaking, not as cartoons. I did apply some of that to the *Rugrats* pilot in the sense that I tried to give the world of the babies a little bit of ominousness. They're very small and everything is

intimidating.

NORTON VIRGIEN: Frank Thomas and Ollie Johnson—two of Disney's greatest animators and mentors to many in my generation—came around to see the pilot with a few of us. When the lights came up, they both seemed in shock. Trying hard to be polite, they nonetheless tried to talk some sense into us: "Do you really think that audiences will be able to connect to characters that don't have . . . appeal?"

MELANIE CHARTOFF: It was rather thrilling hearing my character's voice emanating from this wild-looking creature when I was invited to see the pilot at Klasky-Csupo a year after we'd recorded it. What a trip!

PETER CHUNG: They've become popular, so people have learned to accept it. But before that time, there were no characters that looked like that.

VANESSA COFFEY: Peter Chung directed the pilot and set the tone for our show and how it was going to work. I wish we could have had Peter do our whole series, but he gets bored. He wanted to do something else.

PETER CHUNG: They asked me to stay on and direct more episodes, but by that time, I knew I was going to do *Aeon Flux*, so I couldn't commit to *Rugrats*. I think I was working on *Aeon Flux* while I was working on the title sequence for *Rugrats*.

CHUCK SWENSON: Everybody really liked what Peter did—he's a consummate draftsman, and if you follow animation, you can see his style with the really wide-angle shots that are really distorted—but it was difficult to maintain that quality. The pilot Peter did was pretty much all action. There were just a few short lines of dialogue at the end, a little bit of setup dialogue. The show became *much* more verbal, which helped in terms of production because it was just talking heads. Easy to animate, easy to cut . . .

HOWARD BAKER: That was a shame, because I thought the show did lose its special point of view and just became about talking babies.

CRAIG BARTLETT: Really, what we had was the legacy of Peter's design. It guaranteed the show was going to be weird-looking for its entire run. Peter Chung was kind of extreme. He wasn't that interested in stories. He was interested in visuals . . . and, essentially, the strangeness of childhood. If it had been more Peter's show, it would have been a stranger and more alienating show than it really was.

PETER CHUNG: I always felt growing up as a baby that I was an alien in a world that didn't understand me.

JOE ANSOLABEHERE: Peter is a fascinating guy who I've grown fonder of in other circumstances. But at the time, I was like, "Who the hell is this guy?" Here was this weird Asian guy sitting there and all this shit's happening—all the writers are coming in, people are coming to pitch new stories and stuff—and he's sitting there just staring and drawing and not very polite. You'd say, "Hi, Peter." Nothing. He wouldn't even say hello to you. At one point, we were all sharing this new phone and I'd get back to my office and there'd be a Post-It from Peter, and it would say, *You got a phone call—Peter.* And I'd go out and he's drawing and I'd say, "Peter, who was it?" "I don't know." *Are you doing this to torment me? Do you hate me? Or are you just so focused?* And I don't really know the answer, by the way.

PAUL GERMAIN: Peter Chung doesn't talk a lot. I used to find him sleeping under his animation desk because he was so dedicated. He's a nutty and brilliant guy, and his animation is some of the most beautiful stuff I've ever seen.

PETER CHUNG: I don't know how to work any other way. Because I'm not efficient, I end up spending more time on something than somebody else would. I'm constantly trying to challenge myself and do stuff I don't know how to do. That's how you learn. It just required a lot of trial and error. One of the problems I had was working with a bunch of animators I'd never worked with before. Scenes would come back from animators who were freelancing—most of them—and I'd have to redo them myself. It seemed like a waste of time to give them back to the animators, because they were just going to come back wrong again.

PAUL GERMAIN: Peter does things with perspectives I've only seen done with computers.

PETER CHUNG: A lot of animators tend to focus on character performance. I was always more conscious of how to use the camera. I'd been making animated films since I was sixteen in high school, and one of the first things I taught myself to do was animating the moving camera. Part of that was because, at the time, I didn't have any camera equipment. So I didn't have the ability to pan or zoom or anything. I would actually animate the camera moves right into the drawings. I felt very comfortable about doing that, and it's always appealed to me. I consider the camera a character in a sense.

MARY HARRINGTON: One of the great things about *Rugrats* was that it looked at the world through a baby's eyes. You'd open up on something and say, "What's *that*?" and you wouldn't quite know what it was until it came into context.

PETER CHUNG: *Rugrats* was going to be seen from a baby's point of view. They really wanted to have a different and distinctive style of camera that went with that. You weren't just looking at babies. You were becoming a baby yourself, seeing the world through the eyes of a baby.

PAUL GERMAIN: The show went a long way from Peter Chung's direction on the pilot, but in that he had been doing these shots from *inside* the character's mouth looking out. You can see their little half-teeth moving around. Peter *invented* that shot—a point of view from inside someone's mouth.

PETER CHUNG: The shot of the mouth came from the design of the characters showing these *huge* mouths and these tiny little teeth. That was one of the distinguishing features about these babies. Phil is making fun of Lil, and at first I drew Lil very small in the frame, then Phil very large. It's like we're looking at Lil through a wide-angle lens. The next stage, Phil is so big that he fills the entire screen. We're in his mouth, literally. And Lil is just a little head off in the distance. Inside his mouth. It wasn't gratuitous; the idea was to convey a sense of domineering.

MITCHELL KRIEGMAN: You can't shoot from the inside of somebody's mouth. Theoretically, it didn't make any sense. But Nicktoons was willing not to make sense. They took that leap.

LINDA SIMENSKY: Nick liked that rebel quality, and they were drawn to the fact that John Kricfalusi was rebelling against the industry. *Ren & Stimpy* was far enough from the mainstream that they'd be able to work with him.

JOHN KRICFALUSI: I am completely mainstream and was just following in the footsteps of classic cartoons, movies, and television sitcoms. Still am. Almost all of my influences are very mainstream popular culture. I was not a fan of hippie cartooning, although I share some influences with some underground cartoonists.

THOMAS MINTON: John's approach might be termed "early 1950s . . . with balls."

JOHN KRICFALUSI: It took me a long time to instill a regard for more inventive color choices in my background artists. I kept showing them old magazine and book illustrations and Technicolor movies to prove that there were more than six colors in the world. We also used *Golden Books* from the fifties and sixties as a painting reference.

BILL WRAY: We were looking at everything that we grew up with.

Hanna-Barbera, Disney . . . all these childhood things. In particular, John was like, "I want to do this like a *Golden Book*."

RAYMOND ZIBACH: John and Bill were very precise about what they were trying to do. There was actually a time when the reference John wanted us to emulate was a marble wall in a *Penthouse* spread. I knew I was working on something special when I took that home to do a painting.

CHRIS RECCARDI: I met John when he was transitioning from the 1950s Hanna-Barbera style, which was very uniquely combined with Bob Clampett animation from the 1930s and 1940s. He had been taking this classical, well-constructed stuff and really pushed it. He was still at the time very into mid-century modern art and design. Then when I saw *Ren & Stimpy*, it was completely different. It was like somebody had slipped him a tab of acid or something.

JIM GOMEZ: People were saying, "Oh man, were you guys on acid?" I mean, we took acid, but we weren't *working* on acid. A lot of the creation for this content was done over beers, sitting around with John and a few people in college and down here in LA. But in terms of production, it's very hard to write or draw when you're stoned.

JOHN KRICFALUSI: One of my story guys liked to come into work stoned on pot. He thought it made him funnier, but it just made him stupid. I'm not into drugs. Tried 'em in high school, but never was much of a hippie. Beer is better for you.

CHRIS RECCARDI: I had no idea what they were doing at first. I saw the pilot and thought, "Man! That's whacked out!" It was really fun to watch stoned.

EDDIE FITZGERALD: At the time, just John's drawing *style* was seen as a slap in the face of traditional animation.

FRED NEWMAN: With the little squiggly lines on *Doug*, they're very thin. They have that sort of naïveté about them. And I just understood that. Some of it was Southern: a kinder, gentler feeling that we had even in the midst of New York City.

TONY EASTMAN: Blechman at the Ink Tank where Jim Jinkins and I worked before *Doug* was famous for his squiggles. Jim liked Blechman's style, so he was doing this nervous outline thing with the original drawings of *Doug*. We decided to change, because depending on who's doing it, it's gonna be, like, all over the map; it's never gonna be consistent. So we made it solid lines.

YVETTE KAPLAN: Jim Jinkins is an illustrator and not an animator, so his

initial drawings were a little bit more of a wiggly line. They needed to be smoothed out a little, unfortunately, and look like something that could be produced by many hands.

BRYAN SPICER: They wanted young, hip directors that were bringing a style, a vision to *Salute Your Shorts*. It was nice. A lot of shows don't want that. They want you to stick to their format. This show didn't *have* a format. They just wanted the filmmakers to create something new.

COURTNEY CONTE: We approached Bryan because we saw a tape of his where on *Parker Lewis Can't Lose* he did this wonderful camera shot of a guitar going down a wire from the school. Something like that. It was a really unique camera shot.

KATHERINE DIECKMANN: The reason I got the job on *Pete & Pete* was because of my storyboard drawing of Mom's face when a wooden spoon covered in chocolate hit the floor. They loved that. They thought that was the total "Pete" approach to storytelling.

MICHAEL SPILLER: There were dolly shots, specialty shots, we'd rig things . . . We tried to do little crane shots, and I had a little jib arm so we could add a little movement. From the perspective of an adult, everything's a blip that'll be forgotten tomorrow. But to a kid, everything is so big, and we wanted to fill these stories with big energy.

JOHN INWOOD: When Michael Spiller was moving on, he showed me the beauty of the mini-jib arm, which he'd use a lot when we needed a dolly move. We could skip laying down track and use the mini-jib arm instead to get the push-in we needed. Low to high, high to low, a quick pullout. That, in conjunction with the wide-angle lens, gave us some visual flare.

MICHAEL SPILLER: In "Range Boy," directed by Chris Koch, we had a lot of great shots because the camera was so small and light. It was mine and I could be rough with it. One time, I was strapped on the front of a golf cart and we'd built chicken wire up to protect me and the camera, and these guys were firing off live drives. One ball bounced under the net and ricocheted inside the cage. Somehow it didn't hit my head or the camera. Or there was the time I was strapped to the hood of the car on "King of the Road." It was a little hairy.

FRED KELLER: The production company, Cinetel, wanted to give an authentic look to the dude ranch on *Hey Dude*. Ross Bagwell Sr. told me, "Don't forget, we want the big sky look." Part of this was Ross had been involved with some of the early Roy Rogers movies. He had

a real sense of efficiency of production and getting that western look. He wanted to do the thing in Arizona at the Tanque Verde Dude Ranch, which is one of the biggest and most successful dude ranches in the West. It was a beautiful place in Tucson, supposedly not too far from a corral that Geronimo's mother owned back in the Wild West days. It was all very authentic.

GEOFFREY DARBY: I wanted to not do this in a studio. I wanted to do it out somewhere, because it's a lot cheaper! Again, I was very famous for saying I wanted to do it inexpensively and put the value on the screen.

CHARLES S. DUTTON: Without a doubt, *Are You Afraid of the Dark?* was very, very, very well produced. It wasn't like anything you would see on Saturday morning: those rather inexpensive kinds of halfhearted children's programs. I never looked at it as a kids' show. I didn't leave there thinking we had done anything amateurish. I looked at it as if we were doing a small movie.

COURTNEY CONTE: We were doing a half-hour film every week on *Salute Your Shorts*, for all intents and purposes. Steve Slavkin had the directors push it in terms of directorial style.

BRYAN SPICER: Most sitcoms back then were three cameras and very stage-looking. They wanted *Salute Your Shorts* to be a one-camera film show, where you can make the shows more dynamic.

STEVE SLAVKIN: We wanted to bring film techniques to kids' television. It was a single-camera show that was shot on video and put through the film-look process to give kids mini-movies about summer camp that were scored from beginning to end. We gave them a whole new look they'd never had before.

VENUS DEMILO: We shot at the boys' camp of Camp Hollywood. And I had actually gone to their girls' camp. So I totally identified with that. That drew me to the project more than other people, maybe. The cool thing was we'd go to the bat caves—where they shot the original *Batman*—and I had already been there. That feeling of familiarity with the location—it was like camping when we were doing the show.

COURTNEY CONTE: We were lucky no one else was filming there. We got the whole place for $500 a day or something, which is *nothing*. We were doing a very high production value for very little money. We were doing the show for $180,000 an episode, which is absolutely *no* money for a five-day shoot. That's what I used to spend on *craft service* for *Roseanne*.

ALISON FANELLI: In the beginning, when they were instructing us on wardrobe—*Pete & Pete* was a really low-budget show—we had to wear a lot of our own clothes. You couldn't wear anything too trendy—a lot of denim and white shirts and things that were really run-of-the-mill. And we couldn't identify the state or town we were in. It was meant to be Anywhereville in the country. Even Pete wearing the flannel—it wasn't that Little Pete was "Grunge"-y. He was just a kid who had to cover up his tattoo.

JANIE BRYANT: In designing *Pete & Pete*, I always loved using vintage pieces, because I felt it was a great way to express these characters who were so quirky. The show is about this special world, this special neighborhood. And using those accents of vintage pieces combined with contemporary clothing made the show look incredibly special. It almost has a Wes Anderson aesthetic to it. Maybe Wes Anderson was influenced by *Pete & Pete* . . .

DAVE MARTEL: There's definitely something to be said about *Pete & Pete* creating hipsters.

RICK GOMEZ: I wore patent leather shoes and pencil pants and track jackets. It was like some thrift store from New York City exploded on the set of *Pete & Pete*.

JANIE BRYANT: I love Rick Gomez. I always put him in white loafers.

MICHELLE TRACHTENBERG: I guess maybe the only hipstery thing would be the flannel, but people have been wearing flannel shirts for forever. Then a musician puts it on and people think it needs a title. I just thought it was really fun. Janie Bryant was responsible for a lot of the costumes then. Now she's the costume designer for *Mad Men*.

WILL MCROBB: We were trying to create a timeless universe that was anybody's childhood. That hat was really more about Holden Caulfield than Grunge. You could definitely make the case it was the hipster precursor, but we never intended it to be that. And once Grunge took hold, I never for a second thought there was any connection. It's a little like the myth that Hunter S. Thompson was on an episode of *Pete & Pete*. Little Pete wore plaid shirts, that's for sure. Outside of that, I don't think there's anything you could point to that said "cultural marker."

JANIE BRYANT: Pete and Pete were these kids who were dressing like adults. I always felt like they both had a mature sensibility. That's the beginning of the inspiration. I live in Silver Lake and it's true: All hipsters look like characters from *Pete & Pete*!

JOHN CRANE: I just wanted to not look too fat. The dancers—Ivan, David, Mark—they were more conscious of what they were wearing. I did care somewhat, but they generally weren't putting me in crazy stuff. My background was middle-class—I'm not a dancer; I was a comedian, married—and was a little less wild. My character was that way, too. A dancer's world is a little more trendy than mine. I look back at the episodes and some of the things the girls were wearing—*good lord!*

DIZ MCNALLY: I loved all the clothes and the fashion and the makeup. Purple cheeks, blue eye shadow . . . it was fabulous! All the clothes you see me wearing on *Out of Control* are my own clothes. I did my own makeup, which was *a lot*. The only thing they had to rent was a nun's outfit. I still wear the little purple shirt. The 1980s checkered shirt, one of my favorite outfits to this day!

JUSTIN CAMMY: *You Can't Do That on Television* was so low-budget that at one point they just gave me one hundred dollars to buy new clothes. There was no direction on what kind of clothes they wanted.

KRISTEN NIKOSEY: Don kinda dressed similar to when he was on camera as he would at home. Kinda very generic in a lot of ways. Once in a while, he would put on a Hawaiian shirt because he was doing something, but not very often. He didn't want to call attention to himself. And that's how he was on *Mr. Wizard's World*: It wasn't about *him*. It was about giving excitement about science to the kids he was dealing with.

PHIL MOORE: If there's anything I answer with a kind of jokingly adamant response: *No, I did not choose my own wardrobe!* I didn't know *what* the heck the deal was. I called it the Carlton Banks Collection. I *did* kinda look like a dufus.

ANDREA LIVELY: I can confirm Phil Moore had nothing to do with his wardrobe. They laid it out and he wore it. It was indicative of the nineties. Another thing *I* didn't have to worry about: I didn't have to worry about my clothes because you never saw me.

PHIL MOORE: It was a small concession, though. I went from working in a data center to being a nationwide TV personality. And they wanted me to wear a weird-looking peacock shirt? Okay!

DAVE RHODEN: They brought me in with Jocelyn Steiner, who ended up getting the part of Alex. They had me read with her, but they had me read for the part of Merv instead of Walter, as I had in my first audition. Then they took away our scripts and asked us to kind of ad-lib it and see how it would go, and they seemed to like it, I guess, and

they called us back and said we got the parts. From there they put us in some kind of introductory acting classes, some things to get loosened up. We probably went to those for a few weeks. We went to the first wardrobe fitting, and they brought us down to try on the clothes for our first show. And I put on the shirt and put on the slacks and came out, and they said, "How did everything fit?" I was like, "Well, the shirt's fine, but the pants are a little short." They put me in some high-waters, you know? They were, like, four inches short or something like that. And the lady in charge of wardrobe looked at me and said, "No, they're perfect." I was just like, "Holy *crap*. Everybody's gonna see me in *this*?" That was the first time it dawned on me that I was playing a nerd.

LISA LEDERER: Clarissa wasn't really a tomboy and she wasn't really the weird girl. She was always just herself. This is where I feel *Clarissa* touched a nerve with people, because she was very fluid in the way she dressed. She might have a lot of stuff to do that day, so she might feel like she had to wear combat boots because she could cover more ground that way. There might be a reason she had a ponytail. It felt like what we were doing was creating this girl in a more real way, to represent the way that girls—that *people*—normally dress.

MITCHELL KRIEGMAN: Lisa Lederer was one of these New York folks who brought a Downtown scene sensibility, and when she first came on set, the people at Nickelodeon were freaking out because she had a nose ring.

SARAH CONDON: Taking someone from the magazine world like Lisa Lederer, who didn't have much of a TV background, was what really made people nervous. Not so much the way she looked but the fact that she didn't have any TV experience per se.

LISA LEDERER: I pierced my nose in my own apartment with a darning needle because there wasn't any place in New York to have that done. I guess the corporate people at Nickelodeon felt it was way too dangerous for somebody who looked like that to get their hands on this beautiful young blond character. But I wasn't trying to represent myself; I wasn't trying to represent my social scene. I was trying to represent Clarissa, and I believe that at some point everybody realized that's what was going on.

MELISSA JOAN HART: I wish I had taken more of Clarissa's style. That would have been fun, but I never really paid attention to how it was put together. I was already pretty tough and a nonconformist when it came to my personal life, because just being in a part of New York City where I was living, just sitting on the subway, you're surrounded

by so many different kinds of people, and it's, "Whoever you are is okay." Maybe that's what I brought to *Clarissa*. Even though it was already sort of in the writing. I was able to really pull it off, though, because I understood it.

TOBY HUSS: I found my Artie glasses at a thrift store. I think they were women's glasses. The red pants and white tank top I used when I was first doing the character. I never really thought about it. Sometimes you're lucky enough to create a character that pulls all of the zeitgeist together. Mine was random; Artie was a goof-off and was fun. That was it. When I took those glasses off, though, that was the end of it. I still have those glasses.

ROSS HULL: I don't actually wear glasses. I have twenty-twenty vision. That was certainly a prop. We started off with having lenses in my glasses, but the reflection of the fire was a problem, so by later seasons, they were lensless.

MARC SUMMERS: If you look at some of the kids on *Double Dare*, they didn't come across as the brightest kids in the world, they didn't have much to say, but I think the kids at home related to them more than, *Hi, my name is Sally and I'm a ballet dancer!* We put *real* kids on and that helped a lot.

MICHAEL KOEGEL: The thing about casting these shows: We had to find normal, real people.

ALISON FANELLI: That's what was great about *Pete & Pete*: It's about kids that people had never made a show about before. It wasn't that type of Hollywood studio thing. It's so obvious when you watch *Pete & Pete* versus those shows how different it looked. I love how gritty it is. That natural aspect is why we have such a huge following.

CHRIS VISCARDI: You can imagine *Pete & Pete* was not a show for *everyone*. Some people would sit there and say, "Yeah, uh . . . that was kind of wild." Basically, *What the fuck was that?* And then there were other people who just automatically got it for what it was.

JOHN INWOOD: With *Pete & Pete*, there was an effort to choreograph the show in a way that would give it a design from beginning to end and from scene to scene. That's not the style right now, where we have the "documentary-ization" of shows like *Parks and Recreation*—which I just did a year of—that are embracing a looser, messier documentary style. Studio executives have embraced that because it's led to shorter days, quicker shooting time periods, and the bottom line is . . . it's cheaper.

GERRY LAYBOURNE: At one point, Geoffrey Darby was in seven cities in one week overseeing our productions. I thought, "We're getting so big, we need our own studio." But our company wouldn't have gone for that, because they liked our continued profitability as the bottom line. We got together with the people who were building Universal Studios in 1988 and convinced them to build us two large soundstages at their theme park.

BYRON TAYLOR: Aside from slapping a big Nickelodeon logo on them and picking some bright and contemporary colors for it, we weren't allowed to make changes or improvements to the buildings. We were going to have a Styrofoam T-rex that was used in some Nickelodeon promo stuff and it was going to burst out of the bathroom structure . . . but it proved to be too expensive, so they didn't do it. Really nothing changed except for the added bathrooms.

HERB SCANNELL: Geoffrey and Debby were there for some early brainstorming meetings. Like everything else at Nick, it all came down to, "What's *kid* about it?" There was an idea that there would be air jets shooting out of the floor and somebody's dress might fly up. It would be subversive and unexpected. There were going to be garbage cans that talked to you. The original Nick Studios had Nick toilet paper with the blimp logo, and everybody stole it. So we quickly had to change the toilet paper because kids were taking them as souvenirs. A lot of kids were apparently not "doing their business" appropriately, if you know what I mean.

BYRON TAYLOR: Universal had their own team, and I was the only person available to do conceptual work for Nickelodeon. The way it was presented to me, Nickelodeon was offered the opportunity to have a home—a facility—that was two soundstages, plus office space, a control room, editing suites, and a shop where my guys could do *our* work. It was going to operate as a studio in the classic sense: staff, personnel, camera people, prop people, lighting people . . .

BOB MITTENTHAL: It was like working in a fishbowl.

BYRON TAYLOR: That was an interest on Universal's part, because we could operate as an attraction: People could take tours, go behind the scenes, participate. There would be an event basically every hour.

DEBBY BEECE: The studio opened and there was a huge celebration in Orlando. None of the rides worked. It was 110 degrees. People were walking around with silver trays in black velvet and with Champagne. Everybody standing in lines for rides that were half-open. But it was a wonderful time. Very glitzy-glamour.

HARVEY: You couldn't help but notice the culture change when we went to Universal. That was a big deal, seeing Steven Spielberg at the grand opening and announcing the dedication of the soundstage. There were a lot of suits that we saw. Now there was merchandising and live tours and ad sales . . . and a fountain at Universal Studios Florida that spewed out green slime.

HERB SCANNELL: Success is relative in Hollywood. The people there spent more time ignoring cable than doing anything about it. Now, suddenly, people were saying, "Nick has a place in Florida? What's up with *that*?"

ANDY BAMBERGER: We finally had a home. We finally had a place where *Nick was made.*

MARK MULCAHY: I'm pretty sure, like anything, people would be pretty disappointed about the truth. There's a "Sandy." I *guess* there is. I don't know if that helps to understand it. No one knows but me, and that's a rarity, so I'm hanging on to it. Even the other band members aren't aware of it. I came close to telling somebody, but I didn't. So I haven't told anybody. Don't feel left out.

CHRIS VISCARDI: Will and I had been talking about who would do the theme song for the show, and Miracle Legion was a band we both really dug.

MARK MULCAHY: Will and I had lunch together. He was shaky about asking me if Miracle Legion would do music for the show. At the time, we were having legal trouble, and nobody in the band wanted to do it. I had a partner in the band and we wrote most of the songs and *he* didn't want to do it. So Miracle Legion couldn't do the music. I had never written music on my own, but I volunteered to do it anyway. And then I presented him with the song "Hey Sandy," and the rest is where we are now.

CHRIS VISCARDI: Will, Mark, and I talked about all the things we wanted Mark to do in the song—"We want *this* and to have *that* in it"—and Mark, as he does, kind of nods: "Oh, yeah. Cool. Great."

MARK MULCAHY: I had waited over the weekend to see what their opinion of the song would be. I really wanted a job, because the legal part of my music career was messing me up and this would be great in terms of fortune. I had had a demo of that song, and it really was the only one. It wasn't like five choices. It was, "Here's the one that I have." And it's strange because it *did* work really well.

CHRIS VISCARDI: Two weeks later, Mark sends something back and it was *completely* different than everything we wanted him to do. But it was absolutely perfect. And that's the theme song that's in there now.

KATHERINE DIECKMANN: Believe me, if Mark could concoct a mystery that

people would talk about this many years later . . . But I know that he didn't. He's not that calculating.

CHRIS VISCARDI: Over time, people started getting obsessed with what some of the lyrics were, particularly the second or third line. Mark has always been pretty cryptic about it, has always refused to tell us what it is. I think we'll keep the mystery alive. I don't even wanna know.

KATHERINE DIECKMANN: I love that people are still trying to figure out what he's saying. It's good to have a little enigma around something, especially when it lasts.

MARK MULCAHY: Something Will and I agreed on was that neither of us wanted a theme song that was *about* the show. Not *"Pete and Pete: two brothers . . . blah, blah, blah . . ."* It was going to be its own song.

MICHAEL SPILLER: They gave me a lot of freedom in directing *Pete & Pete*'s opening sequence. I had very little time and money. We did the whole thing in three or four hours. I didn't give Mark or the rest of the band much direction. They just played the song a bunch of times. "Have fun! High energy!"

MARK MULCAHY: He said, "Could you guys just jump around and up and down?" I said I didn't want to jump up and down. I wanted to do something *other* than that. Then he said, "Could you please—just on this take—jump around?" That's the one where I jump up on the bass drum. The stuff they used. The reason I was looking up: I was trying to think of other things to do there. I had never written a theme song to anything, so I certainly didn't have any reason to think that it would be a "successful theme song." But somehow it was.

CRYSTAL LEWIS: We recorded the theme song for *Roundhouse* in our makeshift studio space at Universal. I had known the song for some time, having been involved with the show from the early stages. I remember the filming of the opening sequence more clearly than the recording of the song itself, for some reason. It was one of those days when work didn't seem like work. We didn't have a script, and we were able to just be ourselves and traipse about Universal like we owned the place! The recording of the song, as well as the filming of the opening sequence, in addition to the filming of all the SNICK promos with the infamous orange couch, really began to bring home the fact that we were doing this. It wasn't just a hope or a dream anymore. It was reality.

RACHEL SWEET: I wanted the theme song for *Clarissa* to be poppy. I wanted it to be fun and memorable . . . and I didn't want to write lyrics. I didn't want to do the typical sitcom theme song where it kind

of tells a story or tries to convey what the song is about. I wanted it to just be something fun to listen to, like ear candy. I think that's what we got. I had been recording for many years and was very into sixties pop and girl group stuff like the Shondells and the Ronettes.

ALAN GOODMAN: One of the guys who I had worked with at CBS Records was this guy called Marty Pekar, and Marty was a huge fan of doo-wop and had gone back and found a lot of those early doo-wop bands and had started a label to produce for them. One of the groups he worked with was Jive Five with Eugene Pitt.

MIKE KLINGHOFFER: One of the sounds that kids seem to always respond to—and they've researched it and whatnot—is the doo-wop sound. For whatever reason, it has—I don't know what you want to call it—this "jungle instinct" for kids, like, two to five. They just like that, those sounds.

ALAN GOODMAN: Fred and I called in Tom Pomposello, who unfortunately passed away too early. Tom was a couple of years older than we were and had owned a real hippie record store in the town where Fred had grown up. But he was also a wonderful blues musician. I was working on Nickelodeon and our business was growing, so we brought him in to create those graphics and the soundtracks and all of that stuff. I said, "I don't know how much you know about doo-wop, but there's a lot of that repeated-syllable stuff. *Get-ga-get-get get-ga-get-get*. There's a lot of that in doo-wop." So that stuff was running through my head, and I came in to Tom and said, "What if we just took the word 'Nickelodeon' and went *Ni-ni-ni-ni, Na Nick nick nick*?" And he went off and did *Nickel-O-de-ONNNN!* So the opening part of it was me saying *Ni-ni-ni-ni, Na Nick nick nick*, and Tom came up with the way to end it. And Eugene Pitt was the one who scored it out and figured out what all the vocal parts would be. You wouldn't think it took three people, but it did!

FRED NEWMAN: I've always thought sound is, in fact, music. Crickets are music. On *Doug*, it would be a homemade sound a lot of the time. The rhythm would be rice in a paper bag. It would be two sneakers I would tap together. I would use things that a kid would have had around the house for the actual tracks of music.

DAN SAWYER: We were like kids ourselves doing the music for *Doug*. Because it's so sparse and hand-done, it stands out. We didn't feel like we were constrained. Up to that point, most of the music heard in cartoons was derived from Carl Stalling, the guy who set the template for almost all animated cartoons. It's orchestral and has a lot of chromatic runs and a lot of funny quotes from symphonies. I love that

stuff. We were trying to do something different, though.

JIM JINKINS: And of course, Fred had a virtually endless repertoire of mouth sounds: *Chick-ah-ka-pahhhh!* Meanwhile, Dan could play zillions of instruments, and what he *couldn't* play, he'd either sample in his keyboard or bring in outside players and singers.

DAN SAWYER: Traditionally, that was something you wanted to stay away from. I was even told, years ago, that there were four or five sounds not to use. The first was any human-made sound like singing, clapping, whistling . . . anything human-made. We weren't supposed to use that as an underscore. Those kinds of things would compete too much with the dialogue and take your attention away. We broke a lot of rules on all the Nickelodeon shows in those years.

EDD KALEHOFF: I always do music the classic way. I'm a guitarist and a keyboardist. I was lucky enough in my training in my early years to have a synthesizer as part of the whole mix. The Moog synthesizer. But those are mostly acoustic instruments—real drums and a real guitar and real horns—all mixed together to create a fabric of the "size" that I wanted.

MARK MOTHERSBAUGH: The Fairlight I wrote the *Rugrats* theme on now seems like Iron Curtain technology or something. They had big seven-inch discs and a real low sampling rate—maybe eight-bit or less—but I liked it and I think Gabor Csupo liked that I was using acoustic instrument sounds on that synth. Cellos, guitars, upright basses, horns; they sound more like those instruments than analogue synths, but they still kind of sound like an acoustic guitar. Like what wood paneling—that kind of plastic-coated stuff you get at Home Depot—is to real wood. It was kind of like that. And I liked the sounds because of that sort of not-here-nor-there kind of sound to them.

DENIS HANNIGAN: The toy piano on *Rugrats* was bought at a local mall. There were lots of unique sounds on the show that helped give the series its identity.

DAN VITCO: Yes, I came up with the guitar theme for when Sam comes through the window. I watched him come through the window and went, "Let's see how it fits in." It sounded cool and it seemed to work. The guitar I used was a Fender Stratocaster. And there's something called a tremelo arm—some call it a whammy bar—and when you play a chord, as you let the chord ring out—in this case, it's a D9 chord—you push the whammy bar up and down a little bit, and the pitch is going to waver a little bit. Almost like surf music. It's a little bit of a flowy, dreamy, cool sound. And that's what I used in that

particular scene, every time Sam would enter through the window.

SEAN O'NEAL: I believe Viacom has a copyright on the riff that brought me into the room.

JEFF ZAHN: I've done a bunch of shows along with *Are You Afraid of the Dark?*, and what you've got to do is find a unique sound that identifies and separates it from everything else.

MARK MOTHERSBAUGH: I was lucky: If you were looking for a more traditional score, you found the guys who went to Berklee and were well versed in the world of John Williams. If you were looking for something a little bit different . . . I would get the call.

CRAIG BARTLETT: I'm a huge Devo fan. That was one of the reasons I came to LA: That's where Mark Mothersbaugh was working. As soon as we got the episodes back and it was time to spot them and work on the score, I'd go to Mark's studio. Going to Mark and giving him the lyrics to the Reptar theme and having him come up with the song? I was over the moon.

MARK MOTHERSBAUGH: I scored every episode myself, with my brother and a couple guys that worked with me. I scored the live shows, the TV commercials, and the feature films. I wrote songs for it throughout the history of the show.

CHUCK SWENSON: Mark's a creative guy. You just let him do his thing. But then there was a guy named Denis Hannigan. He was the guy who did the *work*.

DENIS HANNIGAN: Around 1990, I was working with Mark Mothersbaugh writing music on a Disney Channel show called *Adventures in Wonderland* when Gabor Csupo and Paul Germain brought over the *Rugrats* pilot. Mark wrote the theme and the music for the pilot. Halfway through the first season, Mark asked me to write the music on the remaining seven episodes. I was not credited as composer but as "music assistant." Before season two, Mark asked me to be the composer on *Rugrats* and we would share the up-front credit. I came on officially at this point. There was a premiere party and Gabor told me he liked my music.

PAUL GERMAIN: At first, I didn't even know Denis Hannigan. Over a period of time, I began to realize that people other than Mark were doing the music. Now, at what point did that start and how much of it was done by other people? I really couldn't tell you. But I began to realize Hannigan was doing most of the music.

DENIS HANNIGAN: I wrote all the show music on the last fifty-two

episodes of the first run and am credited 100 percent as writer on the music cue sheets.

PAUL GERMAIN: What Mark certainly did do was determine the musical sound of what *Rugrats* was going to be.

JEFF FISHER: I didn't write the theme to *Are You Afraid of the Dark?* That was done by a guy named Jeff Zahn, who wrote the melody. I went into the studio with that and orchestrated it and arranged it, basically.

JEFF ZAHN: As with every series that we do in kids' music for Nickelodeon—and I also work a lot for PBS and Disney—the initial grunt work is at the beginning of the series, where it is most crucial to set up the tone and structure of the music. I was more involved in that and was the one who basically suggested Ray Fabi and Jeff Fisher to come on after.

JEFF FISHER: I was doing a lot of work for Cinar, and the president came up to me one day and said they were thinking about doing this children's thing . . . little bunch of scary tales. In fact, they wanted to call it *Scary Tales*, but the name was taken. D.J. MacHale was in LA and I was in LA, so I scored the pilot. I was basically in the right place at the right time.

JEFF ZAHN: I believe I wrote the theme song to *Are You Afraid of the Dark?* in an airport, waiting for a plane in Montreal. It then changed from me humming to writing it on a piece of paper, a music score sheet. I had the theme and went home and developed it. It became kind of iconic. The composers were told to try to integrate and weave some of that in, which they did.

STEVE SLAVKIN: We were going to have wall-to-wall music on *Salute Your Shorts*. We were going to score it like a feature. Big orchestral pieces, source music. Sometimes Ed Alton brought in live pieces, but a lot of it came from his massive library of samples. We used a lot of classical music, which was somewhat unique at the time, to try to give it a "big" feel. Take a baseball game and elevate it to this massive life-or-death experience. Give the sweeping grandeur to a capture the flag game.

MITCHELL KRIEGMAN: The theme song for *Clarissa* was written and sung by Rachel Sweet, with whom I had worked when I directed her show back on the Comedy Channel. She went off with producer Anthony Battaglia, and when she came back, it was perfect. It was a gift. I don't think I had to change a thing.

CHRIS RECCARDI: They had the *Ren & Stimpy* pilot, and John wanted to

do this thing where they had a party in the dog pound. I was in a band playing upright bass at the time with Jim Smith, who also worked on the show and helped to develop it originally. We were a pretty jammy type of band, heavily into the Grateful Dead, a lot of funk music, classic jazz, blues . . . We had our little thing going and John had no money. He had a clear idea what he wanted, and we were talented enough that once he told us what he wanted, we could ace the style.

CHRISTINE DANZO: We were very restricted with the music. It had to be free for the most part, "needle-drop" or self-performed by Spumco staff to avoid future residual payments.

SARAH CONDON: Mitchell reached out to Rachel Sweet, who we both knew from the Comedy Channel, and said, "Look, we have a certain amount of money, and can you take a whack at this?" It was just a small job; in a way, a favor. And she really hit it out of the ballpark the first try.

CHRIS RECCARDI: John was really into this Polynesian musician called Chaino—this wild native guy who played bongos with sticks. John threw on this forty-five record, and it was this crazy music that had R & B roots in it, basic jump/swing beats with upright bass, but with these *crazy* bongos. "Do something like that! Do something like that!" The whole thing was raw, gritty stuff—like the art for the show. It wasn't your typical timid, homogenized, crappy stuff that most people were trying to write for children's television. What we made for him ended up getting used as a title theme, because when the show went to series, it got to be the time where Nick wanted a song. Various songs were submitted, but John said, "This works best. It has no lyrics. It's just cool." He convinced them to take it.

RACHEL SWEET: Mitchell's girlfriend at the time, Lola, had a studio in the Chelsea district and we just kind of banged it out. It was a lot of fun, actually. Probably three hours and we were done. It became kinda bigger than we ever thought it would be.

BENNY HESTER: We got a great band together. Marty Walsh was with Supertramp, Jack Kelly had toured with Donna Summer, James Raymond was David Crosby's son.

JULENE RENEE-PRECIADO: James Raymond was adopted, like me. I had found my biological parents and he wanted to find his. During *Roundhouse*, he discovered that his birth father was David Crosby. That explains his incredible music gift. It was a whole pool of super-talented people.

ED ALTON: There was a mixture of kids who definitely could sing and

some who were a little more self-conscious. Those were some of the funnier segments in the intro sequence.

HEIDI LUCAS: Poor Venus. I don't think that woman could carry a tune. She did *not* want to sing. She probably petitioned them for hours—"I don't want to sing this. Please don't make me sing this. Can I do something else? Can I rap it? Anything but sing it?" She was *pissed* that she had to sing.

VENUS DEMILO: Michael Bower hit me in the head. He had done it by accident the first time, but then with every take, he'd do it again.

MICHAEL BOWER: It wasn't an accident.

VENUS DEMILO: He'd keep doing it and I'd give him a look and he thought that was hilarious.

MICHAEL BOWER: I did it on purpose *every* time. I was pissed at her that day. I think I was in her room because I was trying to get away from Tim Eyster and I was touching something she had and she started hitting me. She may have been hitting me *playfully*, but any time I get hit, anger comes out. When we had to film the intro in that big wide shot, they stood me next to her and they said, "We want you to raise your hands at the end for Camp Anawanna!" I was thinking of the best way to get back at Venus, and the first time we filmed the intro, I half-punched her. *Bam!* We did it again. And I did it again. And she was *mad*. She said, "Stop it." And then they filmed it a third time, and I did it again!

VENUS DEMILO: We were really immature at the time. If you were there, you would have heard me complaining about him putting his armpit in my face every time.

MICHAEL BOWER: You can see it in her face at the beginning of every episode. She looks right at me when I hit her in the face. It was *great*.

COURTNEY CONTE: Oh, it was *all* improv. Steve directed it. It was hysterical. We just kept going for it.

TREVOR EYSTER: I put my elbow on Danny's shoulder and he takes his finger and pushes my elbow off his shoulder. That's improv . . . but would have happened *off* screen, too. The plan was, the mold was going to shift by virtue of the energy of the actors. Erik MacArthur really did have that "fuck it" attitude.

ERIK MACARTHUR: All I cared about was girls and surfing. Maybe try to steal a beer from somewhere. I wasn't hanging out with these kids, calling them "Sponge" and "Donkeylips." It wasn't my scene. If I was

working on some film or something like that, maybe there would've been a more serious environment.

MICHAEL BOWER: When it came to me with "I hope we never part" in a close-up, I was holding a fishing pole and I don't even know how to fish. So I started messing with it: "What the hell is this?" And it started to break while I was singing. When it came to that part where I'm supposed to say, "I hope we never part," I replaced it with, "This thing came apart," because . . . it came apart. And it rhymed.

CONNIE SHULMAN: There was one day when Patti had to sing a song on *Doug*. I'm not a great singer and we did it several times over and over. This was one time that I could tell Jim was getting slightly frustrated. Patti didn't have to have a great voice, though; it just had to be melodic enough to sound pleasant!

BILLY WEST: I love that Doug would get his banjo and start singing about Patti Mayonnaise; it was very, very sweet. There was a number called "Bangin' on a Trashcan," and that's the number that kids used to make their own little videos out of. I didn't think in terms of making it worse. I thought in terms of what would be his limits as a kid who wasn't necessarily a singer. That's what makes people feel for him: It sounded, you know, naturally amateurish. Therein is the emotional resonance.

MELANIE CHARTOFF: Playing Reptar's girlfriend in the musical version of "Reptar on Ice," singing those arias and love songs to a lizard, just cracked me up. Had to do a lot of retakes that day. The songs were a riot, sappy and written in an operatic style in which John Shuck—who voiced Reptar—and I'd both trained.

DOUG PREIS: I did do a couple of the Beets and my point of reference from Jim was the Beatles, like Ringo and John Lennon and Paul McCartney. They were maybe more of an *amalgamation*.

DAN SAWYER: Obviously, it's a play on the Beatles. But they're *not* the Beatles. They're a British band who are teen idols for Doug and his friends. They're a typical band like Spinal Tap, having ridiculous arguments amongst each other.

ALAN SILBERBERG: I wrote one of the first Beets episodes and put in "Killer Tofu." When I wrote the lyrics to that, I felt like it sort of became its own thing. It went back to this thing Mike Klinghoffer had told me on *Double Dare* about how we could do whatever stunts we wanted with tofu because nobody eats tofu and so it wouldn't be too wasteful. I sort of loved the idea of seeing a big killer tofu. I never considered myself a songwriter, but by putting these goofy lyrics in a

script, I created a pop culture canon. I just got a check from ASCAP two days ago. The little, tiny amounts keep rolling in.

KATHERINE DIECKMANN: When I was cutting the first spots, I got this idea —because I'm a fan of Jean-Luc Godard's movies—that I'd introduce stock music in a very kind of ironic way where I'd use the music and then cut it abruptly. I wouldn't fade it. It was very shocking to everybody: *You can't use music that way in a cable show!* And I was like, "Sure, why not? Why can't you?"

ALISON FANELLI: Picking music and sound effects was kind of Will and Chris and Katherine's baby. They spent *hours and hours* going through the stock music and using stuff that no one else had used. Katherine would search for hours just to get *ten seconds* on the show!

KATHERINE DIECKMANN: Then it kinda got on my nerves because *SpongeBob* and all these shows *completely* stole that idea and went to the same exact cues, in fact! "Oh yeah. I know those cues . . . because I *found* them for *Pete & Pete*!" They were all in the stock library, but nobody was using the stock library that way.

SYD STRAW: They told me I was going to be in a band with Danny on one episode. So we needed somebody to be in the band with us. I called Joey Ramone, but he said he was leaving for Europe the next day on tour. That would've been a very different version of the Blowholes.

MELANIE GRISANTI: The show opening of *Doug* is one of my favorite things. I *love* it! The simplicity of what happens with the line and the music and stuff . . .

TONY EASTMAN: When we were timing out the *doo-doo-doo do-do-do dooo-do-do-do-do*, I showed Fred what we were gonna do and he figured out how the sound could go with that ahead of time. Usually, these things are post-scored, and this one was done ahead of time rather than the music being added in later.

FRED NEWMAN: I had to graph it up. "This is where Skeeter swings and hits the screens. This is where the dog barks happen on the upbeat." That was the most complicated piece we ever did, because we were finding our way, and finding the sound.

TONY EASTMAN: What Fred was doing with his mouth could be considered "scat singing." It's like on *Seinfeld*, where they had the bass guitar playing with the cutaway of the outside of the restaurant. That became a little transitional segue type of thing.

DIZ MCNALLY: I call it the "Diz Call," but it is a shriek. My whole family

does it. Even my grandmother and my grandfather used to do it. Just the call in the neighborhood, when you'd be riding bikes. After you finished supper, you'd go out and stand on the porch and go, *Eee-ooo-eee! Eee-ooo-eee!* Now I've got everybody in Hollywood doing it, even the UPS drivers and the post office guys when they go by at the newsstand where I work! It doesn't hurt my throat because I can even do it with my mouth closed. It just automatically happens. I've never lost my voice.

FRED NEWMAN: I had learned from these old storytellers in Georgia. Most of these old stories they would tell started in Africa and came over, translated. I heard them toned and with all these sounds of dogs and bears and rabbits they all did. And they would do voices, too; they would become old people and babies. I wanted to do that. The first sound I ever really learned was the sort any second-rate kid in the South learned: the water drip.

ALISON FANELLI: They would record *everything* that was going on in the neighborhood during *Pete & Pete*. All that stuff, that non-produced, non-glossy, non-conveyor-belt type of stuff, was what made it so great.

FRED KELLER: By not having a laugh track on *Hey Dude*, even though we were shooting in a sitcom style, we preserved the location, the reality of the ranch, that *Spin and Marty* feel. They wanted to keep it more of a location type of show rather than impose on the audience a feeling that they were sitting in the bleachers watching a typical sitcom.

BRENDA MASON: I had to spend many days adding the laugh track to *You Can't Do That on Television*, and yes, it was annoying. There was one particular laugh track that we referred to as the "girl machine gun." The sweetener, Dan McLellan, got very good at it. We would start at the beginning and he would sweeten on the fly. We'd stop and edit when necessary, but usually it was a fairly quick process.

MARK SCHULTZ: I would go through hours of audience sounds, identifying a whole spray of laughs—applauses, remarks, individual people laughing . . . I filled up a sampler full of all my laugh recordings, and I had them hooked up with touch-sensitivity, so if I hit the keys harder, the laugh would be louder. And if I held the keys, the laughs would sustain. And I could overlay things. I could drop in a giggle or a single person. Sometimes jokes are aimed for guys and they'll get it faster than a girl will. And sometimes girls will get a joke first. I matched the ambience; the audience recordings were from the same place we taped the shows, so they didn't sound like they came out of a dead studio. I got to the point where I could make laugh tracks that didn't sound like canned laughter at all, and I was very

proud of it.

GERRY LAYBOURNE: I did not want a laugh track on *Clarissa*. It seemed so fantastic without one. But I lost.

GEOFFREY DARBY: It *was* a sitcom, and I believe in laugh tracks. They're cues. You can test shows with and without and they'll do better with. Why didn't we do it on *Salute Your Shorts* and *Hey Dude*? Because it's unreal. It's outside. Then it *feels* wrong. Whereas *Clarissa* was clearly a studio show. It could've been shot in front of a live audience.

MARK SCHULTZ: I hate the laugh track on *Clarissa*. It's one of the worst laugh tracks ever.

STEVE SLAVKIN: Laugh tracks were at that point associated with multiple-camera sitcoms, so I didn't want to try to break that mold in *Salute Your Shorts*. I have since done single-camera shows with laugh tracks, and sometimes it helps. Ultimately, I don't know which is better or worse.

ELIZABETH HESS: Oh, I could do without the laugh track. But because I didn't grow up with TV, I didn't know what the status quo was for sitcoms, and so I was like, "You know what? Whatever. If a laugh track is part of the deal, then so be it."

BUDDY SHEFFIELD: The laughter on *Roundhouse* was always real. We never sweetened anything or had fake laughter added to the show. It all happened on the set.

ED ALTON: When there's a live audience with a laugh track, the music takes a backseat. There's less of it, and it's used just to go from one scene to the next. But in a single-camera comedy, typically there's a lot more, because there's no audience. *Salute Your Shorts* was like that, so it left a lot of room for music.

PHIL MOORE: Before shooting one day, a sound guy was doing a full studio audio check and they kept playing different music over and over. I never really paid attention to the song, because I always have a hundred other things on my mind. After hearing it so many times, it got in my head. When we brought out the first studio audience that day, the song popped on and I sang it the whole episode. Went to lunch, came back for another show, and I didn't do the song. The executive producers and James Bethea came over to me and said, "What happened?" I had to think about it. What do you *mean*? I was just kinda goofing before, but they said they liked that. And it became a staple of the show. Literally, it was a fluke.

DAN VITCO: He was trying to capture the attention of his audience, so I

can respect what he was trying to do there.

MARK SCHULTZ: Dan Vitco and I wrote the music for *Nick Arcade*, including "Mikey's Walk," which came from the *I Dream of Jeannie* theme song.

PHIL MOORE: My son told me a PA friend of his said it's a drinking game now, where every time I sing on *Nick Arcade*, someone takes a shot. That's my legacy: The future of America is getting wasted thanks to my songs!

MARK MULCAHY: How good a thing can be when the suits keep their hands off of it! That's why that kind of thing survives. It's someone's vision. Nobody told them what to do and they made it and it still works because it makes sense. When something comes along at the right time and people want it, that's the thing about pop culture. I always say that about Hootie and the Blowfish. You can't blame *them*. They just did what they were doing and somehow at that moment, everyone wanted *that*. Fourteen million people bought that record. It's not that good, but a lot of people were waiting for Hootie for some reason, and there it was. Kids wanted what we were and it came.

FRED SEIBERT: The doo-wop sound we used to start the new Nick was almost the last piece of that communications puzzle that Alan and I brought to the table. We had two specific reasons for bringing those sounds. One: It's the reason commercials use jingles, that movies use songs—it's a seductive form of communication. And Alan and I really love black music of every kind. We grew up in the age of Civil Rights, thinking that black music was exotic but that it was more authentic than the other music that was around at the time. And we really believed it in our hearts—even though we used it as a sales pitch—that educating America's youth with the sounds of black music was good for American culture. What was bad about that? It also reflected the right attitude—that fun attitude of Nick.

THE DIVERSITY

why were so many of the people on nickelodeon white?

MIKE KLINGHOFFER: So here's the *non*-politically correct answer. The year is 1985. We were trying to reach our audience, which at that time—in the cable world of twelve million households—was maybe a few million kids. Upper-class white kids.

GERRY LAYBOURNE: Yes. We were interested in kids with cable.

GUS HAUSER: The others didn't get Nickelodeon. We were giving it to those who subscribed. Children who couldn't afford cable were getting some children's programming from PBS. Sure, it brings up issues of diversity and income level.

SCOTT WEBB: We thought we *were* being diverse in our view of kids. From fat and skinny to stupid and smart. We saw that as diverse. I mean, I'm a blind guy, and people looked to me to help figure out the vision of Nickelodeon. So I think we were extremely tolerant. Any artist, any kind of contributor who was willing to show up and do their best work, was welcome at our table.

DEBBY BEECE: There wasn't a lot of talk about kids from East LA or Omaha. We just thought there was a lot more that kids had in common by just being kids. Sense of humor, wanting to play and have fun, needing a break, school, bullies, parents—all these things that weighed on kids. And we were going to be the place where they could relax and have fun without having to worry or think or be preached to.

JASON ZIMBLER: *Clarissa* was set in the Midwest and the Midwest is pretty white, right?

JUDY GRAFE: We did have an African-American boy or girl as part of the group on *Pete & Pete* every now and then. I wish maybe we could have had more diversity, but it would not have belonged there at the time of shooting. We were shooting in New Jersey and in a neighborhood that looked like that. At the time, it was appropriate. Same as on *Sanford and Son*. That was a guy with a junk shop in that particular neighborhood. Why would they have a whole lot of Caucasian people show up?

LARISA OLEYNIK: It may seem forced to do that kind of thing, but let's force it until it's not.

SYD STRAW: The world is still widely segregated in places, and that breaks my heart. At the *Pete & Pete* reunion, I was astonished by how it was a pretty pale crowd. It *was* a pretty white show, wasn't it? But the writers were writing what they knew about their childhood. I don't think they were consciously excluding anybody. It certainly wasn't a show aimed at inner-city kids, though.

MICHAEL MARONNA: We were out in Jersey. In White Picket Fence Land. It's not surprising that we resonated with suburban kids, because we shot in suburbia.

TOBY HUSS: It was about Will and Chris and where their sensibilities came from. But it was not a racially mixed crowd. It was a lot of white folks.

CHARLES S. DUTTON: You could have levied that charge on anything that had to do with media at that time. As a matter of fact, when I was asked onto *Are You Afraid of the Dark?*, I thought it was about time they started using black people or people of color on there. Look, I can be totally straight here. I did not let that shade my decision one way or another. If it lacked diversity, then bringing me on was a way to get them to start thinking differently. Now, what they did after the episodes I did, I don't know. Did the diversity get better? I don't know.

VENUS DEMILO: The great thing about Nick was that they had so much ethnicity represented. *All That*, *You Can't Do That on Television*—those were my shows. I identified with those characters.

OMAR GOODING: We did a great job of appealing to all kids from all walks of life.

ALAN GOODMAN: Nickelodeon was always in my recollection a pretty diverse place.

MICHELLE TRACHTENBERG: We were surrounded by a hundred crew people, and there was *every* race on the crew. So it never felt like *Pete & Pete* was ignoring one or the other race, shape, or size.

LINDA SIMENSKY: The animation industry is sort of blindingly white and blindingly male. A lot of people who have just moved to this country and are working so hard so their kids can go to college want them to be doctors, lawyers, businesspeople. Something noble. Not makers of cartoons. So you'll find the industry is very white.

FRED SEIBERT: White people can make stuff for black people, black people can make stuff for white people, for Chinese people, for Russian people. There's no magic formula for making anything. What you have to do is understand who you're making stuff for, not *be* that person.

MICHAEL KOEGEL: We were just part of what was going on at the time. Diversity became more important down the road. Corporate culture got very politically correct, and everybody was afraid to do anything that wasn't PC. We used to make jokes about the "PC Police." When we were casting *Are You Afraid of the Dark?*, we had to make sure we found one or two black families so this could be the "average American show." We had to do that. We couldn't have thirteen episodes of white people. That was a constant thing.

JASON ALISHARAN: Nowadays we take that kind of diversity for granted, but in 1992, D.J. MacHale was *way* ahead of his time in making sure his show represented all kids, not just white kids. There was absolutely no problem with there being interracial relationships on the show, and again this wasn't commonplace for 1992. They didn't think it was even worthwhile to comment on it; instead, they just played it like it was normal, which is the greatest testament to representing diversity on a show.

ADAM REID: Before Roger eventually brought me onto the show, I had called in to see about getting on *You Can't Do That on Television* . . .

ROGER PRICE: Adam Reid wrote me a very erudite letter containing some valuable and pertinent criticisms of the show. I thought it must have come from an adult who either had some knowledge of TV or a considerable gift for analyzing how a show might be improved. I called the number given so that I could invite him out to lunch and see what he had to offer.

ADAM REID: My mom got on the phone to talk with Roger about how to do that. The first thing Roger said was, "Is he black?"

ROGER PRICE: I had hopes this kid might be useful. And if he was black as well . . . I had been searching fruitlessly for a suitable black boy. "Er, you don't happen to be black, do you?" was the first thing the astonished child heard me say.

ADAM REID: And when my mom told him no, he said, "Oh, too bad. Had I known he was black, I would have brought him in right away, had an interview, and probably put him on the show within a week." That was a big thing that plagued Roger: He could never find African-Canadian or African-American kids.

ALASDAIR GILLIS: Roger saw potential in all *sorts* of kids. Regardless of ethnicity. And maybe he had a sense that nonwhite kids were even more at risk to be underappreciated for their abilities.

ROGER PRICE: We were equal-opportunity slimers. We live in a multiracial society, and it is the duty of the producer making shows for children to, as far as possible, arrange for all of the children who will see his show to have some chance of seeing themselves reflected in it as equal members of that society and with an equal right to have nasty things fall on them from above.

ROBIN RUSSO: At the live road shows, we were running through audiences, and people were yelling out, "You're not picking enough blacks! You're not picking enough whites! You're not picking enough girls! You're not picking enough boys!" And this was during a time when people would throw soda or popcorn in your face.

JAMES BETHEA: We were completely open when we were looking for hosts on *Nick Arcade*. We didn't have a type set in our mind. It could have been a *female* host. We didn't think of ourselves as doing anything momentous in terms of having an African-American host. I was an African-American *producer*, if you want to go that route with it. I didn't think of myself that way. It just turned out that we had gone with an African-American host.

PHIL MOORE: *Nick Arcade* was nominated for a CableACE Award and we flew to California for the ceremony. While we were out there, the NAACP Image Awards were happening. They arranged for James, Karim, and I to go. It was weird: When we got there, we hadn't realized at that moment in time, there was no other African-American host of a TV show. We realized we missed out on that. We were just having a good time, trying to make a funny little game show about video games, the best show we could.

PAUL GERMAIN: People were saying *Rugrats* felt too white, and I respected that. We hadn't done that on purpose. People said we ought to open it up and make it a little more diverse. It seemed like a good idea to everyone, so we did that.

STEVE VIKSTEN: There were discussions. "We don't have any blacks on the show." I thought we should have a black character. So I created Susie Carmichael.

CHUCK SWENSON: She was put in for that exact purpose: The show was too white-bread. She was a strong character, she was good at what she did, and she didn't make mistakes. That was a conscious decision.

MICHAEL BELL: It was brave. The only thing they didn't have was a gay kid, which I would have welcomed. Great! Little cross-dresser. Fine with me!

STEVE VIKSTEN: We didn't want to make it like *Cosby*, but it was sort of like that. I wanted them to be characters who could be white or black but happen to be black. I don't think we had any Latin characters. I grew up in Puerto Rico, and I would have loved to have gotten into that.

SEYMOUR GREEN: For me, every time I would step on the *Roundhouse* set, I would get a big response. Calling my name. A lot of people wanted to see more of me on the show. I felt like, at the time, they should have brought us out on the show more maybe. Not just Rita Hester, but I think Nickelodeon. I think they were a little iffy about bringing us out. I kind of noticed that.

RICK GOMEZ: My family is Hispanic, and I was probably the most ethnic guy on Nick, or at least on *Pete & Pete*. At the time, I got the suburban idea. Will and Chris were genuinely talking about this small, little world. They were telling the story from that point of view. I don't think there's too much to it.

DONNIE JEFFCOAT: Before Annette left, we had the Latin, the African-American, and the white boy on *Wild & Crazy Kids*, so I was kinda surprised they didn't get another Hispanic lady to fill Annette's shoes.

JESSICA GAYNES: When they brought me in after Annette, I thought, "Why would they want another white kid?" Apparently, it didn't matter. I was a minority, too: I was an oddball just to begin with. I had super-red hair!

JASON ZIMBLER: That was great. Being a "ginger" was such a commodity, such an ace in the hole. If you're an actor, the thing you want to do most is distinguish yourself. *Nobody* has red hair! You win the lottery! That's not an albatross; that doesn't hold you back. Of course, a redheaded kid is cuter than a redheaded adult . . .

JOE STILLMAN: *Pete & Pete* was *redheaded* white suburbia. I guess it was the kind of suburbia where I grew up. And probably not terribly representative. We brought in some diversity in terms of Ellen Cleghorn from *Saturday Night Live*.

DAMIAN YOUNG: While working with her, I wasn't thinking about her race. It was my first episode and I was very green at that point. And we had to kiss. I had done some work, but nothing commercial, really. She was a huge star. Obviously, I was a little nervous about that.

JIM JINKINS: It's pretty common knowledge that Skeeter was African-American. And I love that, because I did not consciously set out for that to be the case; I just thought he looked good blue.

BECCA LISH: Skeeter was blue. Not any other color. Just blue. When I as Judy say the line, "Is he the blue one?" it was more about how the older sister can hardly be bothered to *keep your little friends straight, DOUGIE!* It could as easily have been any characteristic of any character. It never occurred to me that the show wasn't speaking to any and every kid who turned on the TV.

DAVID CAMPBELL: I don't know what kind of TV you have, but Skeeter was *blue*. The whole idea for the colors is we were addressing those issues early on: Look, we're not black people, we're not Mexican, but we want the cartoon to speak to all groups. How do we get past the barrier of ethnicity? And Jim said, "Let's try coloring them all different colors."

CONNIE SHULMAN: I grew up in a very Baptist white area where there was no diversity, and it was creepy. Jim did an incredible job with having diversity in *Doug* without shoving it down anybody's throat or making some sort of political statement. It was just pure colorful joy. There wasn't a question of, "Oh, you're green, so you don't fit in."

DAVID CAMPBELL: People criticized it and said it was stupid and crazy. But I like it. Forget about race and inclusivity; kids liked it because it was *weird*.

JOHN CRANE: As a parent now, there is some material that I think of on *Roundhouse* as slightly racist, more adult. One of the sketches we did —it was really funny and I think *I* wrote it—was a parody of *Where's Waldo?* with Alfred. It was a sea of white faces and his black face in there. *Can you find Waldo?* And he's the only black guy in the thing.

SEYMOUR GREEN: That was a little funny: Waldo being a black guy and kinda sticking out. The way the whole show was set up was okay, and if you watch more than that episode, it wouldn't make you feel uncomfortable. That's one thing I liked about the show: At the end, we're all involved in it and it's a family. We as a cast were able to say it if we thought something was uncomfortable.

KEVIN KUBUSHESKIE: Brodie Osome's dad did take exception to the racial content or undertones of some scenes on *You Can't Do That on Television*.

JUSTIN CAMMY: One could say they were making fun of 1980s dictators, but when you deconstruct it, the scenes with the firing squad exposed

the most racist notion that White America had of what Latin America was. There couldn't be a show now that would feature a racist description of Latin Americans and Spanish speakers. The Latin-American lobby would bat down the doors to take the image off.

GEOFFREY DARBY: We were always inventing things and doing things because they seemed funny at the time. The "amigos" at the firing squad? It's a cartoon. There was nothing racist on *You Can't Do That on Television*. Just like the violence was all *cartoon* violence. We tried not to think about it.

ABBY HAGYARD: Everything on the show had a deliberate edge of irreverence. One of the sketches featured one of the black kids asking Dad where he came from and Les Lye's character said, "I was hoping *you* could tell us that."

JUSTIN CAMMY: It may have been coded, but they never made fun of my Jewishness.

MARJORIE SILCOFF: At first, I was very uncomfortable about being the Jewish kid. Luckily, Justin was there, too, so there were two of us.

MICHAEL BELL: I was reading for Drew on *Rugrats*, and then later on they asked me to do Grandpa Boris. I had a background with Jewish history. My grandmother and grandfather from both sides of the family came from Russia. For years, I could imitate them and brought that to the role. People from the Anti-Defamation League started complaining that Grandpa Boris was a caricature that Hitler had designed to create animosity toward Jews.

MELANIE CHARTOFF: I loved the relationship between Minka and Boris, and their squabbling was so familiar to me from my own family. For Minka, I mustered all memories of the *bubbies* from the Fairfax district and my own long-gone grandmas into a Yiddish gibberish tirade. And this was Didi's mother from the Old Country, so I kept that same strident falsetto pitch, then added an accent.

PAUL GERMAIN: Boris and Minka were based on my grandparents named Semen and Minka, but I didn't want to use "Semen" for obvious reasons. We were all Jewish and we were doing the older generation. Michael Bell was doing it, Melanie Chartoff was doing it, and I was writing it. It was *years* later when some group was angry that Boris was a stereotype and I thought, "Maybe *you* think he's a stereotype. *I'm* doing my grandpa."

MICHAEL BELL: That was inane and a waste of everybody's time. *I'm* Jewish! That's what my grandfather looked like! They came from

small communities; they were not beauties. My grandmother was a cute little potato! My grandfather was a potato!

MELANIE CHARTOFF: According to my mother, it resembled anti-Semitic caricatures promoted by the Nazi propaganda film *The Eternal Jew* that she had seen as a young girl. She thought I was parodying her late mother, a pudgy, uneducated Austrian *bubbie*. I shared her fears with the staff—comprised of lots of reformed Jewish folk—who didn't want to back down from what we felt were affectionate and distinct portrayals rather than hostile stereotypes.

MICHAEL BELL: We presented the Hanukkah show to an Orthodox synagogue and they *loved* it. They roared and cheered. A whole synagogue full of Jews and not one of them stood up to say they didn't like how we represented Grandpa Boris. But they cut back on Grandpa Boris anyway, because they didn't want further troubles with the Anti-Defamation League. *What? You're going to let* them *decide how the show should run?*

DEE LADUKE: My consciousness was not high enough when I wrote the original pilot for *Hey Dude*, and the Mexican-American boy who was added later was something I had never thought of. I'm really happy that character got added.

FRED KELLER: Because we were dealing with the West, it was much better with the Native-American character getting involved and becoming the expert of flora/fauna. That was natural. It was one of the more important things *Hey Dude* did.

KELLY BROWN: I thought they brought the character of Danny on because there was such a positive Native-American feel out there and they wanted to bring that character to life. I never thought of him as a token Indian. And Joe Torres wasn't Indian. I think he was Mexican.

LISA MELAMED: I'm fairly certain he was Mexican.

MICHAEL KOEGEL: They wanted me to find the character of Danny, who was American-Indian. They put me on an airplane and I called every school on every Indian reservation in the local Tucson area. I talked to school administrators, and they let me meet any kid who was interested in being an actor. It had to be a boy, of a certain age . . . I was walking around with my video camera and my tripod over my shoulder. It was a wild adventure. Finding an actor who was Native-American was really tough. Ultimately, we fudged it because Joe Torres was really Mexican-American. He had a *little* American-Indian blood in him, but once you get in that part of the country, there's a fine line between what's an American Indian and what's a Mexican

Indian. It's a cultural divide.

FRED KELLER: The problem was finding an actor who could do it at the age group and do it at the budget that could be pitched for each episode. We weren't doing these things in Hollywood or New York City. In Hollywood, we'd say, "I need a one-armed paper hanger with red hair who has a parrot on his shoulder." And fifty of them would show up.

BOB MITTENTHAL: Orlando was a pretty shallow talent pool as well. I don't think we had a lot of Asian kids on *Welcome Freshmen*.

MICHAEL KOEGEL: Bob had his hands tied, because they would not let us cast that show out of New York City. All those kids were from Orlando.

CHUCK VINSON: When you take a look at the story on *Clarissa*, it's somewhat of a small cast, and it got to the point of bringing on whoever was best when it came to the task of being a day player. There was a little bit of, "Yeah, lemme try to get some Asian people here or some black people here." When we did a high school play or restaurant scene, you do see more people of color, and I would make sure to open that door a little bit more. But it was very limited down in Florida.

RON OLIVER: There were issues with the cultural differences on the *Are You Afraid of the Dark?* set, because even though D.J. had assembled a really good, smart crew, they were primarily French. Most of them spoke English, and I studied some French in high school, but I'm not fluent. So it was a little bit tricky sometimes, and we'd have communication breakdowns here or there.

ELIZABETH HESS: Like a good Canadian, I went off to study in England. I came to New York with all my Canadian accent bashed out of me and had a standard British accent. And all the agents said, "You'll never work unless you lose that thing." And I thought, "Oh! I've spent all this time and money . . ." So I thought whatever happens, that's my voice. When I was cast as the mom on *Clarissa*, there was actually some concern about my accent because it's very transatlantic.

ABBY HAGYARD: Sometimes a joke on *You Can't Do That on Television* would originate in Roger's British and we would have to translate it to Canadian.

JUSTIN CAMMY: Then there was the Americanization of the show we didn't understand. In the "College" episode, the script kept referring to colleges I'd never heard of—Vassar, Barnard. What the hell is that?

And in Canada, we don't call things "pop" or "soda." We only say "soft drink." I call my mom "mum," obviously. We would say "aboot" . . .

CHRISTINE MCGLADE: Roger always said the reason he picked Canada was that we didn't have accents. For American ears, obviously, we had an accent, but to us, we didn't at all.

VANESSA LINDORES: We were told not to say "eh." Other than that, we had no idea we had accents. I live in the U.S. now, so now I hear it. It's funny.

CRAIG PRYCE: When you get the right elements visually, I don't even think you can notice. There's always this thing about "oots" and "aboots" and that kind of stuff. There was a real coproduction element on *Are You Afraid of the Dark?* with people involved both stateside and also sometimes Quebecois.

ROSS HULL: There were key words that I learned very quickly not to make the mistake about. In Montreal, it was different than Ontario English, so we kind of had to modify it a little bit. There was "roof" and a few other key words that we had to learn how to say. Or "sorry" instead of "sore-y." That's a big one. To this day, as a Canadian broadcaster, people will write to me and say, "You sound American."

FRED NEWMAN: Jim had a Southern kid on *Doug* with Patti Mayonnaise, and that was kind of rare for a series at that time.

CONNIE SHULMAN: I'm from East Tennessee, and some people are better at losing their accents than others. I guess I didn't do that. I've been up here a long time, and it's the kind of thing where sometimes it works and sometimes it doesn't.

BECCA LISH: Connie is unusual in that she actually sounds like that. I think she initially auditioned for Skeeter too, but who could now imagine Patti Mayonnaise sounding any other way?

WENDY LITWACK: To go with the Southern accent true-to-life was very bold. Most other kids' networks would never have done that. They go for the very homogenized, pasteurized, all-American talent.

COURTNEY CONTE: Nickelodeon wanted us to look like the UN. They wanted a little bit of everything.

ABBY HAGYARD: We had Brody and at least three or four black kids. There were some Native Canadians, there were some Asians on the show. We had someone who was Inuit. We had people of different cultural backgrounds. We had French, we had people from different countries. We had a very diverse set of children on that show. I am

Caucasian. Les was Caucasian. That was just happenstance. I like to say that I've remarkably kept my figure, having had 260 children!

KEVIN KUBUSHESKIE: There was also the fact that one girl who might be your girlfriend in one scene was your sister in another. *That's* where there was some of the funniest off-camera dialogue.

ADAM REID: Les and Abby thought it was great that they had this multiethnic, very diverse family. That was part of the beauty of the show. When you're in it, you don't think it's special. Of *course* there would be representations of all these ethnicities on the show. That's what school is, that's what communities are. Why wouldn't this be reflected on television?

CHUCK VINSON: We were doing an episode of *Clarissa* during the time that the Rodney King trial led to a verdict in favor of the cops, which started a riot. LA was just *on fire*. We were doing an episode where Clarissa goes back in time, and I needed torches to show the chaos in this scene. So I used to make small, little statements within scenes when I could. You know, show what was going on at the time.

VENUS DEMILO: I didn't think about it in terms of race at all. We were all so different. We came from all walks of life. We were so many different races, all together. On *Salute Your Shorts*, it was more about girls against boys than it was about race.

DAVID SIDONI: The girls on *Roundhouse* would say the guys tended to be immature and childish on set. I would say they were right. We didn't care. We had fun! It was the guys against the girls. We'd be playing with remote-control cars and other games and video games. Just being boys.

JASON ZIMBLER: Being a guy on a young girl show? Bravo. Lucky to get a gig on a show that's doing such unconventional work. It didn't need to be about "guy power." Although there was "Ferguson Explains It All," when we kicked her out of the opening titles and my character rewrote it. We even redid the titles for that episode.

SEAN O'NEAL: Being on *Clarissa*? Geez, I was the "best friend." I was "the guy that climbed through the window." I had this idol status, even though I was a nobody. I still have that to go on. "I was that guy on *Clarissa*."

CRAIG BARTLETT: I was the only boy in a family of four kids; my sisters provided me with that raw material. I've always thought in all my writing, the girl characters are a little smarter, they're driving things, they're kind of in charge. And the boys are clueless and goofy and can

do the pratfall stuff. More pure ego lurching around, crashing into things, and the girls are more trying to drive things. All that stuff I think is true, and I like to write that stuff.

STEVE VIKSTEN: The women characters kind of ran things on *Rugrats*. It started with Stu. Jack Riley came in, and I thought he was miscast because he was always playing these downbeat, sarcastic characters. Melanie Chartoff then played her character so upbeat, like a yuppie. There was a character sketch of the twins' mother, and she was always wearing workout clothes with this female symbol on her sweatshirt. Angelica's mother, Charlotte—my favorite character—was *always* on the phone. The father bowed down to his wife as the alpha dog of the group. All the women were like that on *Rugrats*.

DENIS HANNIGAN: Some feminists were concerned that Angelica was being portrayed in a negative light, but I talked with Paul and he said to keep doing her music the same way. He wanted her strong. She was fun to write for.

PAUL GERMAIN: When I was a little kid, in fifth grade, there was this bully who was picking on me, and it turned out she was a girl. I was terrified of her. This became an emblematic thing in my life: a girl bully. I thought it would be cool to do a girl bully on *Rugrats*.

CRAIG BARTLETT: I heard about that. It's funny that there was a girl who used to beat him up and that Paul identifies with Tommy. I kind of identified with Tommy, too. I tried to think about my earliest memories, and that would put me into Tommy's head.

CHUCK SWENSON: Men are in something of a backseat these days. You see that in popular culture: movies about men being goofballs, guys who are incapable one way or another. They're children, like the Adam Sandlers of the world. Or even George Clooney—the Sexiest Man in America—gets played in *Up in the Air*. It's a real representation of the popular psyche.

HOWARD BAKER: Didi was just as dumb as Stu. Betty was so strong that it became her weakness. Later, when the Carmichaels came along, the mom was such an overachiever that she became a joke. They were *all* pretty inept.

VANESSA COFFEY: Stu was a new dad. And I thought Grandpa was a strong character. Obviously, Chuckie's dad is goofy, but we wanted it to be funny. We felt safe with it.

CHRIS RECCARDI: *Ren & Stimpy* was a man-driven show. That comes more from the sensibilities of the thirties and forties, when cartoons

were all male-driven. I don't know that there was any sexism going on. Cheryl Chase was a professional voice actor. Lynne Naylor was working on it and also did some great voice work on it, too, because they couldn't afford to pay anyone else.

CHRISTINE DANZO: As a woman, I was delighted to be working on the show. I laughed all the time. I was not the only female. In fact, it was almost a fifty-fifty mix on the first six episodes.

CHERYL CHASE: There were women in the office at Spumco, where they made *Ren & Stimpy*. There were a lot of artists hanging around. Lynne Naylor was an artist. I never felt it was a boys' club.

EDDIE FITZGERALD: There were lots of conversations over lunch with a bunch of guys wondering how we could get more girls in there. John would say things like that: "I feel like I'm in a locker room or something!" At the time, not many girls had that sensibility; some did, thank God. We were always delighted when a new girl came to the studio, and I never *ever* saw any discrimination there.

JOHN KRICFALUSI: Cartoons in general are a kind of "boys' club" and most cartoonists are guys, but there are some very talented girl cartoonists, too.

HEATHER SHEFFIELD: In the beginning, I was the only girl on the writing staff, so I did more girl-focused stuff. The first thing I pitched that made it on the air was a Reebok pump bra that inflates like a pump shoe: small, medium, and Dolly Parton. *A League of Their Own* was in theaters, and I pitched a parody of it for boys who threw like girls. Eventually, my dad put quite a few women on staff, but prior to that, I was the only girl.

LISA MELAMED: The girl characters on *Hey Dude* were as interesting and as complicated as the boy characters. My first episode was about Danny, and it was nice to be able to pull from my own relationships in my teenage years and write about that. One story I wrote—"Sewn at the Hip," when Melody's best friend came to visit—was so intensely about my relationship with my best friend that I sent her a check. I didn't come in with a particular female agenda, but I always knew I wanted to write about the living drama of being a teenage girl.

RON OLIVER: I'd like to say *Are You Afraid of the Dark?* was a boys' show, but I have a feeling it was split down the middle, because we would switch off every episode with there being a girl protagonist or a boy protagonist. They were quite conscious of that at Nickelodeon. We were one of the first shows that actually tried to straddle the middle line and succeeded at it.

KARIM MITEFF: Girls at the time tended to not be big video game players. So we had to figure out a way to make *Nick Arcade* appealing for girls. James and I did our own focus testing and found that girls definitely liked video games, but they liked the kinds of games where they could discover things or where there was some kind of magical device or something that gave them a hidden power. So we incorporated that into the endgame and that got the girls excited. Girls did seem to be less proficient in the endgame. Could have been hesitancy, to some degree. Not as quick to perform . . .

MITCHELL KRIEGMAN: I believed that boys and girls had a lot more in common. Part of that was growing up with older sisters who could beat me up sometimes. I didn't grow up with the same sort of stereotypes. So the distinction was never really an issue for me, and I thought that if we could create a cool girl who boys liked and girls wanted to watch, then we could prove it to America that we could make a show with a girl protagonist.

TOMMY LYNCH: The premise of *Alex Mack* was based on my father, who was a nuclear physicist and kept radioactive materials in our garage when we were kids. I always wondered what would happen if I ate them, and that was the basic idea of *Alex Mack*, which was originally written for a boy: Alex. Herb Scannell, who was president of the network at the time, called me up and said he loved the script and that he had only one note: The lead should be a girl instead.

LARISA OLEYNIK: Which I think, obviously, was a great choice!

TOMMY LYNCH: I did some very little changes, and Alexandra—a girl—was born.

ALISON FANELLI: I actually thought for a while that Ellen was kind of wimpy. I would get upset with how Will and Chris would write how Ellen would be pining for Pete, but Pete would have a new crush in every episode. I did love that they made her an A student and that she stood up for what she believed in and challenged authority and all that stuff. She gave Pete good, levelheaded advice. Katherine was absolutely key in giving Ellen a good role. She and I always had a very special relationship and still do. She always asked for my input on the script.

LARISA OLEYNIK: I never gave it much thought, but I liked that Alex was a tomboy. My clothes were comfortable, and I didn't have to worry about getting them wrinkled. That's all I cared about when I was twelve.

LISA LEDERER: Sometimes, as a woman, I find it offensive that men need

to write things to teach me what strong women are all about. But when Mitchell would talk about this, it wasn't like he was trying to show girls how to be strong girls or that he was trying to show women how to be their quirky, unique selves. It felt like an authentic voice coming from him. There was never anything weird or offensive or creepy about it all, for me.

RACHEL SWEET: I don't care whether you're male or female, young or old, white, black . . . doesn't matter. If you can write something that people identify with, that's what matters. Mitchell doing a show about a young girl never bothered me at all. I never felt he had to be it to write it.

GEOFFREY DARBY: Gerry said that men can't write for women. And I said, "That's not fair; that's not true," and that Mitchell should write them. And she agreed that she was wrong.

GERRY LAYBOURNE: The first thing I said was if Mitchell was creating it, I wanted to make sure there was a woman writing or directing it, because I didn't think he could get it without having a woman there in a top creative role. A few months later, they brought me the pilot and I said there was no woman writer and no woman director and that I was not going forward on this show. They were busted because they didn't have the nuance right. Geoffrey Darby knew I was right, so they fixed it.

SARAH CONDON: Mitchell hired female writers, obviously, and was very respectful of that. He would often say, "How would you feel?" or "How did you feel?" or "What would happen if this happened to you?" He was quite wonderful about that, and really talked to Melissa a lot, too.

LISA LEDERER: I was really excited about being able to put something on TV that people might not have seen before, especially around a young girl. Clarissa didn't behave the way young girls had been behaving on TV. For me as a visual person to try to describe that to a viewing audience through wardrobe, those are the kinds of problem-solving challenges a costume designer really loves.

HERB SCANNELL: That's what I set out to do as director of programming: make sitcoms and news shows for kids, put lead girl characters and race diversity in shows that hadn't been done before. It was like having a palette of paint where they used only black and white and all of a sudden there were all these colors available to us. That was the beauty of working at Nick.

THE CHALLENGES

why did they kick the creator of *ren & stimpy* off his own show?

RICHARD PURSEL: This is the most loaded question of the lot. An entire book could be written based on this one alone.

BILL WRAY: We did a cartoon called "Man's Best Friend." Nickelodeon wanted twenty seconds cut from that. Maybe a little more. We were all stunned that John wouldn't make the cuts, because Nick was giving him an ultimatum. "Nope, I'm not cutting *one second* from that cartoon. It's genius." Which it is, but this was when we were beginning to get a lot of success, and John was feeling it. "I am the most successful Nickelodeon thing. I'm giving my heart and soul to this thing. *Don't fuck with me!*" And this was the highest-budgeted film we'd ever done. I heard rumors that we got close to spending $250,000 on it. A *lot* of money for a cartoon back then. Nick wanted their investment back, they couldn't get it, and they had to shelve this expensive cartoon. I went to Jim Smith thinking he could reason with John, because I'd talked to Bob Camp and Bob wanted to cave, thinking Nick had a point. Jim was like, "Fuck Nick." And that was the catalyst.

BILLY WEST: Nickelodeon loved the fact that *Ren & Stimpy* was delivering Christmas to them. It was raining gifts and presents and revenues. They loved all that. But I think they kind of wished that it wasn't the content that it was.

JOHN KRICFALUSI: I don't think *Ren & Stimpy* was too offensive. We introduced farts and boogers to cartoons, but kids fart and pick their noses and laugh about it all the time. Things that offend *me* are ugliness, slasher movies, and reality shows.

GERRY LAYBOURNE: The first six episodes were not that scary. What happened *afterward* was scary. When the show was a success—and it was a giant success right off the bat—I had dinner with John and he said, "Now that it's a big hit, you have no right to tell me how much it's going to cost, when I'm going to deliver it, or what the content is." And I said, "John, you know what? I really don't care what it costs. And I don't even care about the delivery. But the content *is* important. I can't let you do that."

WILL MCROBB: John became fixated with George Liquor, who also ended up in "Man's Best Friend." Nobody at Nick wanted George Liquor. That created a lot of bad blood.

MITCHELL KRIEGMAN: There were *massive* storyboards brought in about George Liquor, who was not a character we had bought. When we originally saw *Ren & Stimpy*, there were sixteen to twenty characters. And we chose just those two characters. *Doug* had tons of characters, and *they* had to hone it down, too. If there are too many characters, you don't know who to focus on. You can't depart from the show you'd been successful with.

VANESSA COFFEY: John had tried this before. I had thrown one of his storyboards away: "Are you kidding me? You're *not* doing that to Ren and Stimpy." And then it was "Man's Best Friend," with a memo saying he couldn't deliver it on time and on budget. Basically, "We'll get it to you whenever we get it to you. F U."

CHERYL CHASE: *Ren & Stimpy* got a little too violent for me. I don't like too much violence in cartoons. And creative people sometimes lose control and make bad decisions.

BOB JAQUES: Vanessa Coffey asked me to animate new scenes for "Man's Best Friend" to replace the objectionable content so it could be aired. Out of respect for John and his position, I declined to do so.

VANESSA COFFEY: When we got it, we couldn't air it. I walked down to Gerry's office and said, "We can't air this." And we didn't.

CHRIS RECCARDI: I agreed it was scary, but "Man's Best Friend" was something new, you know? It looked gorgeous. I felt like they could have aired it, but the show was getting a lot of attention and there was a lot of fear about what parents would think.

THOMAS MINTON: Nick banned the episode, and John resorted to floating it as a bootleg VHS tape just to get it out there. This was all front-page news in *Variety* and the *Hollywood Reporter* in September of 1992. Around the same time, John was fired by Nick.

VANESSA COFFEY: I was the last person who wanted John to leave the show, but he gave us no choice. You can't be in production with a producer who's out of control.

THOMAS MINTON: It was front-page entertainment news because a creator had been canned from his own megahit creation. Hardly Nick's finest hour. A great deal of subsequent animosity was exacerbated and perpetuated in print media interviews given by people on both sides of the issue.

MIKE FONTANELLI: I had friends on both sides, and there was a lot of resentment. For some reason, there's still resentment years later. The people we're talking about have not moved on.

JOHN KRICFALUSI: Lots of people have their own opinions, as is their right. You can never get everyone to agree on anything. But not all opinions are equal.

JIM BALLANTINE: The sad thing about the breakup is that it was painful for *everybody*. I don't think the show ever really recovered from it. We were getting death threats. Nickelodeon was still a small handful of people at the time who had never had to deal with a tough situation like this.

JOHN KRICFALUSI: During the summer break between season one and two, Gerry Laybourne invited me and the main creative crew to New York to wine and dine us in congratulations for the success of the show . . .

JIM BALLANTINE: There was a point where John flew out to New York to meet with the Nickelodeon executives, basically to say, "Just give us more money and more time because we're brilliant and we're making the best damn cartoon on TV." While John was in New York City, Bob Camp went to John's door and drew a huge pair of balls that was repainted by the time he returned.

JOHN KRICFALUSI: Gerry made a toast to us—telling me I had put Nickelodeon on the map—and once we started talking, I asked Vanessa and her if they personally liked the show. They assured me they loved it, so I took the opportunity to ask if they would trust my crazy story ideas more during the second season. They promised they would.

WILL MCROBB: John truly believed that kids wanted things that were disgusting. Many conversations we had were about how grossness was good and grossness was art.

CHRIS RECCARDI: John and I went to Roscoe's Chicken and Waffles on Gower Street and you'd see the likes of George Foreman there. A lot of heavyweight people, African-American culture, entertainment business. Generally, we were the only white guys in there at the time. We're at lunch and John came up with this idea for "Ren's Toothache" where the gum holes get stinky and so disgusting. He's describing this entire thing to me, and right in the middle of it, this giant black guy at the table next to us goes, "Hey! Hey, hey!" I turn around and look at him. "I'm trying to eat my food here! And you guys are talking about boogers and pus!" That ended up going in the show. That kind of stuff

happened a lot.

WILL MCROBB: That's what Nick wanted, but there was a line. "John, you can't do a blowjob joke on *Ren & Stimpy*." "But no kid's gonna get it; it'll go right over their heads!" Every time I'd make a counterargument, his response was, "It's not like I'm showing them fucking."

HOWARD BAKER: Spumco had issues with getting things done all the way sometimes, and some shots would be ripped out of an artist's hand and just thrown in the box half-baked.

JIM BALLANTINE: Compared to television animation that's made today, these were *very* generous budgets, but John's demand for perfection kept the productivity very low. John would not allow a storyboard or a layout to move on to the next stage of production unless it was perfect. And the interaction with Nickelodeon became more and more confrontational.

VANESSA COFFEY: We had sheriffs trying to get our materials from John out of his studio.

EDDIE FITZGERALD: *If* John was at fault for his so-called perfection, it reminds me of the Pope telling Michelangelo to hurry up with the painting of the Sistine Chapel. John was creating the future of the animation industry.

FRED SEIBERT: Though John clearly has a large group of minions who believe that he does no wrong to this day, I thought he did a lot of things that were uncool. And I think that *Nickelodeon* did some things that were uncool.

HOWARD BAKER: We all want to do good work, but I'm afraid John didn't understand that by selling a show to a TV network, he also had a responsibility to get it done under some parameters. I was the last step to getting each episode done, and I had to have all my ducks in a row or things wouldn't go forward. John behaved under the impression that the overseas studio would stop whatever they were doing to work on his show. They would not. The studio was a business and had *other* screaming clients, too.

MARY HARRINGTON: The sixth episode of *Ren & Stimpy* took so long to come out, we had to premiere it as the "Lost Episode" of *Ren & Stimpy*. They had turned that bad situation into a very funny one. It was all about creative freedom in the past, but now it was, "How much money is MTV Networks willing to spend on *Ren & Stimpy*?"

LINDA SIMENSKY: The airing schedule for *Ren & Stimpy* was episode one,

then . . . episode one. Then episode two. Then back to episode one. Then episode three. Would that make *you* happy?

EDDIE FITZGERALD: Somebody who was in the position to know said to John, "I have the statistics of how the show is viewed. And the repeats exceed the previous week's airing."

VANESSA COFFEY: Yes, we got good ratings with *Ren & Stimpy* with few episodes . . . but the ratings for *Doug* and *Rugrats* were over 2.0, too. That whole *block* raised the ratings for Nick, not just *Ren & Stimpy*. And ultimately, we couldn't syndicate it the way we could with *Doug* and *Rugrats*.

JIM BALLANTINE: We were under an enormous amount of scrutiny, and the show was starting to receive a lot of publicity.

CHRIS RECCARDI: It's been impossible to get the straight story because there's so much drama. I only know the facts: They were missing airdates; they were not delivering episodes.

BOB CAMP: Is somebody saying otherwise? If so, they're liars.

JOHN KRICFALUSI: We actually only missed one deadline. For the sixth episode of season one. "Stimpy's Invention" was late because Nickelodeon had told us to stop production on it after they saw the storyboard. We were told we'd have to write a new story and draw a new storyboard from scratch. When I told them that would make the show late, they didn't seem to understand why. They thought you could just snap your fingers and new cartoons could appear—for free—out of the air instantly. Vanessa had already signed off on the story outline, but Will McRobb had been against the story from the beginning. He kept telling me we shouldn't make a cartoon about "mind control" for kids. I had no idea what he was talking about.

BOB CAMP: We got away with great shit all the time, because Vanessa Coffey fought for the show all the time. She was John's greatest supporter.

VANESSA COFFEY: John wasn't the only one who had battles at Nick. So did I.

JOHN KRICFALUSI: My relationship with Vanessa was great until the end. She liked the heartwarming scenes, and I pushed for the stuff I knew kids liked. So we would together concoct a bipartisan cartoon show.

BOB CAMP: Vanessa was always supportive, and Will McRobb was a good writer and helped a lot. If we didn't have notes, the shows would probably not have been so successful.

JOHN KRICFALUSI: I literally had to beg Vanessa to let me put "Stimpy's Invention" into production. But by that time, we had lost a month through no fault of our own. "Stimpy's Invention" and "Space Madness" were both rejected by Nickelodeon before I talked them into letting me do them. And they turned out to be our two most popular episodes.

GEOFFREY DARBY: Of course John was difficult. He was also *brilliant*. But then he would get angry at the network and put something in because he's crazy. He'd say, "Oh, I'll get them for killing this! If I can't do butt plugs, I'll do *this*!" *Okay* . . .

RICHARD PURSEL: John figured he'd teach the execs a lesson and have his worst artist do the changes they wanted. Of course I saw it as a chance to shine, though my drawings were pretty bad. Nick didn't want Ren to pray for "girls and cars," so my change was "huge pectoral muscles and a fridge with a padlock." "Magic boogers" became . . . "magic nose goblins."

JOHN KRICFALUSI: When they ordered season two, they told me they wanted twenty new episodes . . . in the same time it took us to deliver *six* in the previous year! I told Vanessa that would be impossible. I tried to talk her into going down to at least thirteen—like a regular cartoon series—but no. Halfway through season two, Vanessa called me and told me they wanted to do a *Ren & Stimpy* movie. Normally this would be great news, but they were expanding too fast and it wasn't realistic.

JIM BALLANTINE: It was real tense. John would get really angry at the artists, and because they weren't producing anything useful, he would want them fired. But he really didn't like conflict, so he had me do it. That's how I got the title Pink Axe. It was the first time I'd ever fired people. Many of the artists who were fired were relieved, because a lot of them would get blocked with their drawing. They *couldn't* draw because they were so afraid John would criticize them. He had a problem when they would listen to music on headphones, because he thought it meant they were only using half their brain.

CHRIS RECCARDI: I was so depressed and insecure all the time, afraid of failing, that I had trouble working. When I got my first storyboard done on time that was reasonably clear and well done, John added a lot of stuff and embellished it, but then he gave me an extra check in my envelope. It was a bonus for good work. He did have the ability to reward as well as to punish.

CHERYL CHASE: Sometimes people buckled under the pressure because

John needed things a certain way. He was a perfectionist, but he got what he wanted. Some could handle it, some couldn't. I could handle it. I loved working for him. It was fun and creative. I dug it.

CHRISTINE DANZO: Eventually, production fell behind and Nick's—Mary's and Vanessa's—reaction was to impose stricter, more invasive controls on production. They were bypassing John and myself and going directly to Spumco personnel, asking questions and giving instructions, which caused major confusion and discord within the studio.

EDDIE FITZGERALD: The second season started with John, right up to the middle of the season. Then in the middle—it was a horrible day—John was in Canada and I came to work. One of the PAs came over and said, "Hey everybody, you can put your pencils down, because we're under orders to pack up and send the show to Nick." It took me by *complete* surprise. A friend of mine, Mike Fontanelli, felt the same way. We were just there with our mouths open.

MIKE FONTANELLI: Eddie found out Nick was trying to take the show away from John. What was happening wasn't right. We called an infamous meeting in the basement of Spumco. It was informal. No one *had* to go and lots of people chose not to.

EDDIE FITZGERALD: I said that because John was the brain behind the show and since it wasn't drawn or produced like any other show out there, we should hold out. And I look around the room, and some people are looking at the ground. I didn't understand why.

THOMAS MINTON: Eddie was—and is—in love with the process of discovery and boundlessly optimistic, regardless of the circumstances in which he may find himself.

EDDIE FITZGERALD: What I didn't know is that half the studio knew about this for some time and had negotiated salaries with Nick. The people who knew about it were reluctant to talk at the meeting, and finally a girl stood up and said, "This sounds like McCarthyism to me. You're saying we have to sign a loyalty oath to John or else we can't work. And I'm against McCarthy."

MIKE FONTANELLI: Someone made a remark that I will remember until my dying day: "It sounds like you're asking for a loyalty oath." At that point, we lost control of the meeting. All of a sudden, Eddie and I were inquisitors at HUAC.

JIM BALLANTINE: Nick pulled the plug. John called us all in a room and told us he had to shut down the show. Nick stopped paying Spumco.

BILL WRAY: John burst into tears and had to run into the other room because he couldn't compose himself. I've never seen him cry before or since. He said some pretty damning things to me after it happened, too. That he was relieved, it was killing him, hadn't had a solid shit in two years. There was a lot of spin on his emotions to accept this devastating loss.

JOHN KRICFALUSI: Of course I wasn't glad to leave. I created these characters and a whole new studio system that allowed creative people to do their best work. It was a long struggle against all odds to make "creator-driven" cartoons happen. I had proven that my ideas and methods worked and expected to be rewarded for it. To clear up a misconception, the show was not taken away from only *me*, but from the whole studio.

RICHARD PURSEL: I was sharing an office with Bob Camp when the whole split was engineered; I entered the office one day to see Bob and producer Jim Ballantine huddled around a speakerphone call with Vanessa and Mary Harrington, who were in New York. Bob went around the studio soon after, telling people, "You've got a job . . . if you want it." Bob raved that things would be so much more fun without John telling us what to do, but when I told Bob I couldn't in good conscience leave John for a job with him, he called me a traitor.

BOB CAMP: John called me into his office and gave me his blessing to do the show and the feature they were talking about. I promised to make sure his unfinished shows were the best ones.

MIKE FONTANELLI: Jim Ballantine tried to lure me to Nick's Games studio with a pack of lies. I got a phone call from him promising me directorship and a 40 percent increase in salary just for starters. I told him I wouldn't betray anyone, especially not a fellow cartoonist. So he told me John was on board. Ten seconds later, I was on the phone with John and it was news to him. I never saw Games. I never set foot in the place. My nose is clean.

JIM BALLANTINE: I wanted to keep working and so did most of the people on the show. Anyone from Spumco who wanted to work on the show at Games was welcome to. I didn't approach Mike Fontanelli or anyone else. Vanessa or other Nick folks may have.

MARY HARRINGTON: We were a little removed from that. Jim Ballantine was on the day-to-day of the show, and he was more in tune with what was really going on. He weighed into the decisions.

VANESSA COFFEY: Jim Ballantine and I would make lists, and he would talk to people because there were obvious loyalists. Mainly it was,

“Here’s who’s coming, here’s who’s not.”

GEOFFREY DARBY: It’s just business. And that’s not a negative. If I’m Bob Camp, I need to be able to do X-Y-ZED, and that’s a promise I’m making to the network. He needs to get people who are gonna help him *do* X-Y-ZED, not people who are going to throw themselves in Bob’s way.

EDDIE FITZGERALD: In my opinion, it couldn’t have happened without the artists going over there, and I’ll include Billy West in that. I think Billy did a horrible, horrible thing. There’s another guy whose hand I wouldn’t shake. I’m disgusted by it.

BILLY WEST: Everybody has been so misinformed for years and years and years. I just came to work. And there were a lot of people at work there. If I *didn’t* continue to go on, all those people might’ve been out of work.

MARY HARRINGTON: When we took over the show and needed Billy to do Ren now, too, Vanessa and I were at a recording session with him and he was saying, “You should be ashamed of yourself! How can you do what you’ve done?!” He was pretending to be Ren doing John’s voice.

BILLY WEST: That was not my war. That was between John and Nickelodeon. The only pressure I had was being able to scream and yell and perform the hell out of the characters. I came to know John, but it wasn’t like I hung out with him all the time. People tried to spin it like I was a bad guy who left behind some fallen comrade, and it wasn’t anything like that.

BILL WRAY: John has always tried to spin it that if Bob Camp hadn’t been willing, they wouldn’t have done it. That somehow Bob stabbed him in the back. He had to blame somebody. *No, they fired you because you would not bend!*

BOB CAMP: It’s easy to try to blame the network for things going wrong instead of accepting responsibility for what went down. I’m on good terms with everybody except John. And frankly, I couldn’t care less.

EDDIE FITZGERALD: Bob Camp, who led people away from the studio, later came over and talked to me at lunchtime, saying something reconciliatory. He wanted to shake hands, but I wouldn’t. I still won’t to this day. Bob had talent and was an interesting person to talk to, but he had a deep moral flaw. It was an immoral act to take John’s show away from him, especially in view of all the things John had done for him. Dante reserved the lowest level of hell for the person who did evil to his benefactor.

MARY HARRINGTON: I would say three-fourths of the crew stayed, and the rest didn't because it was too difficult for them to continue.

JOHN KRICFALUSI: Only a handful of shortsighted fools went with Nickelodeon to help them form their own studio. Then they all fought among themselves and wondered why no one was loyal to each other. One of them very angrily told me on the phone months later how Bob Camp was a real backstabber. Duh! Surprise!

MIKE FONTANELLI: John was supposed to fade away and be forgotten, and they were all to move on from *Ren & Stimpy* to even bigger and greater things. It didn't work out that way, because the new Games cartoons were mean-spirited and ugly and more expensive. And they were as late as ever, if not later.

BOB CAMP: We did the series, got them done on time and on budget.

CHRIS RECCARDI: Censorship wasn't so bad when we were at Spumco. It was harder at Games. John was very good at negotiating with them on that level.

WILL MCROBB: In a way, Bob Camp's era was probably grosser than it had ever been. But what had gotten John in trouble was his "dad issues" were working their way through characters. Bob's episodes were tame in comparison to the psychosis John brought to George Liquor and to the "Anthony" episode. The father in that episode was the most psychotic character John ever made. Everyone who saw it said, *This is not what we want to show to kids*.

RAYMOND ZIBACH: We always wondered what the hell Nickelodeon was thinking. Why did they want *Ren & Stimpy* and then censor it all to hell? We all hoped that Viacom would leave it on MTV; that pairing made the most sense and was hugely successful when they did that for a few weeks.

VANESSA COFFEY: It was working on *our* network. Just because Viacom owns all the networks doesn't mean we don't still compete with each other. We were getting good ad sales off the shows. And kids loved *Ren & Stimpy*.

LINDA SIMENSKY: It was *ours*! We liked it! We were a little territorial. We enjoyed the notoriety. It put Nick Animation on the map.

GERRY LAYBOURNE: If Nickelodeon had been one year further in its development and stronger, I would've done the right thing. Which would have been to give it to my struggling little sister, MTV.

GEOFFREY DARBY: We said yes so many times to John and there was a

point where enough is enough. It was like being a battered wife—and I don't understand battered wives, how they can do it. So we finally had to tell John, *NO*.

GERRY LAYBOURNE: I really took it seriously. I read psychology books about what happens with these kids that have had a really troubled childhood, which he had had. How do you manage them? It was painful. And we had to fire him.

WILL MCROBB: There's a *Ren & Stimpy* DVD that came out that was from the season after John had been fired. He's on the commentary track with all the "traitors" who took the show over. What sick person thought of putting John's commentary on those shows?

HERB SCANNELL: The issues that were there were about delivery and consistency. Unfortunately, it happened the way it happened. It was really tough for all of us. John made some great episodes. The best of the whole batch.

JACK SPILLUM: You'd have to be naïve to think this kind of thing doesn't happen all the time. Everybody should get their shot, but where do you draw the line? On *Doug*, we met every schedule and I don't think we ever went over budget. But the creativity was there. And Jim Jinkins got to do what he wanted to do. That balance, that dichotomy, was what cartoon-making should be all about.

KEN SCARBOROUGH: I was sad when *Doug* went on after we were at Nickelodeon and they didn't keep Billy West. That was a big mistake.

WENDY LITWACK: Billy decided he wanted more than everyone else in the cast. When you do a show like this, there's a thing called "Favored Nation." It's very important that nobody makes more than anybody else. They're all putting in the same amount of time.

BILLY WEST: I don't spend much time mourning the end of a cartoon. For me, it's time for another door to open. But what did bother me was that they were gonna go to Disney and they were sending me these deal memos that I was ripping up and throwing away. They were outrageous demands. They wanted me to do upward of twelve characters for less money than I made on Nickelodeon. They also said that I would have to fly from California to New York, because I was getting ready to move to California. I would have had to go back from California to New York just to do *Doug*. I said this is a little much, and they kept sending these memos. And finally I said, "Look—all of you—I wish you nothing but the best, but leave me alone!"

BOB POMANN: Doing the sound effects for *Doug* was almost like doing a

movie: It was very time-consuming for me. I had to work every night, including weekends. I gave up time with my kids. *Doug* became my girlfriend. I felt like it was worth it.

DAVID CAMPBELL: We were there from nine in the morning—sometimes earlier—until midnight or later. Sometimes we'd stay until three or four in the morning writing premises, because Mister Kriegman or Master Coffey would say, "This sucks. Come up with something better." It was pretty intense, but it was fun.

VANESSA COFFEY: I didn't use story editors at all in the first seasons when Mary and I were doing it together. Then we were doing three series and six pilots and developing *Rocko's Modern Life*. I needed help, so I brought Mitchell and Will in.

WILL MCROBB: Mitchell had a huge hit show. He was a scientist of comedy. But people running their own shows he story-edited admired him less. If he had been more beloved, I wouldn't have gotten those jobs. I think he had a more pedantic style—preaching his theories—and I was just a wide-eyed enthusiast. And I think that was easier to digest.

DAVID CAMPBELL: It might have been a Waterloo moment when there was a script meeting at Nickelodeon and Mitchell said something along the lines of, "Doug would never do that."

MARY HARRINGTON: When I was working with Mitchell, who was our story editor on *Doug* at the time, helping us give notes to Jim and his team, there was an episode when Mitchell said, "What if Doug did *this* instead of *that*?" And Jim was like, "But that's not how it happened!" I felt like we were giving story notes about this guy's *life*!

ALAN SILBERBERG: I never felt rewritten by Jim Jinkins. But I know that Jim and Dave Campbell were very involved in the scripts, going line by line through them. I always felt that the shows got better.

DAVID CAMPBELL: There was an episode of Doug finding some money and he goes and returns it to the police. Our writers were up in arms against it. They were like, "What kid is gonna find money and return it to the police station?" So Jim and I had to take the weekend off and go to the country and write this episode. Every now and then, you're inevitably gonna have a clash.

JOE ANSOLABEHERE: Mitchell offended me so many times. The last time he offended me, he said he wanted me to do something some way and I didn't want to. Then he told me just to try it. So I tried it and we were having a conference and I had to call Mitchell and I said, "We

tried it. Paul doesn't like it, Arlene doesn't like it, no one likes it. I have a roomful of writers here who agree it doesn't work this way." And Mitchell said—and this was the end of me and Mitchell—"I don't fucking care if the whole Writers Guild West disagrees with me. I want it this way." We went to Paul and said, "We're quitting if Mitchell doesn't leave."

PAUL GERMAIN: Little by little, it grew worse until it became clear to me we couldn't go on like this. I had writers telling me, "Either he goes or I go." Honestly, I like Mitchell, but I wish I would have taken a stronger stance with him from the beginning.

JOE ANSOLABEHERE: He went and fired Mitchell, but at that point I had already quit, and was too proud to come back. When Paul fired Mitchell, he found out that everybody else—including the *Doug* guys, who are the nicest people on the planet—had already fired Mitchell. "Goddamn it! Why am I the last guy to fire Mitchell?"

MARY HARRINGTON: I'm sorry things didn't work out with him. Mitchell was a significant part of getting Nicktoons up and running. Especially in the writing areas.

CRAIG BARTLETT: The hard thing about Mitchell was that we'd have an outline for a story, but we couldn't go to script until Mitchell approved it and he was down in Florida shooting *Clarissa*. Paul would be going crazy because we wouldn't hear from Mitchell all day and we *had* to get the script in. It was insane that they had Mitchell as the gatekeeper on our show while he was shooting *Clarissa*. I blame Nick for that.

JOE ANSOLABEHERE: To give Mitchell credit where credit was due, in the second or third season, we were doing all of these crazy things, and Mitchell noticed this, saying we didn't need to lose the silly comedy but that we should write in different genres. So every five episodes we'd write a "WH"—"Wreak Havoc"—episode. Then we'd do a Tommy episode. Then a Chuckie episode. Then one about the kids being afraid. We would do an "experimental" episode every tenth, I think. They were all genres we created so we could keep the series fresh with something new. And that was thanks to Mitchell.

KEN SCARBOROUGH: Will was great, but *Doug* wasn't his show. He was at times in a hard place, because what he was doing—like all of us—was making sure everybody was happy. There were some weird screaming fights about whether or not the show was too mean. Jim was a professional and would calmly reiterate his idea of what the show was. He's an expert at keeping it in. I had a story editor I brought in—

a guy who I'd work with in the past who was very abrasive—and we sometimes were all shocked at how this guy would fly in Jim's face while Jim just sucked it up.

DAVID CAMPBELL: The thing that sticks out the most for me as far as what made Jim Doug and Doug Jim—and this was really intrinsic to all the stories—was this crazy emotional extreme where he imagines the worst thing that could possibly happen to him . . . and almost at the same time imagines the best thing that can happen. He actually manages it pretty well, like a straight, even, calm, sweet, kind, gentle person. Which he is. But his inner emotional life has much more turmoil.

VANESSA COFFEY: We never had an argument. The only thing Jim ever said to me was, "*Ren & Stimpy* is getting so much attention because of John. I feel like the squeaky wheel gets the grease." And I said, "Jim, you have no idea how thankful I am that I have you. You don't need the oil."

WILL MCROBB: Jim was the anti–John K. He was a genius too, but in a self-effacing, low-key way.

KEN SCARBOROUGH: Jim was always wanting *Doug* to be a safe place for kids who were like him, without blood or scary things like that. Nickelodeon was at the time trying to push the edges of what cartoons did, so in some ways they didn't know what they'd gotten with *Doug*. I think it was a much gentler show than they'd wanted it to be.

DEE LADUKE: *Hey Dude* was about a very secure place where the scariest thing was a snake in the road. We knew we would never have a *Degrassi* thread. We wanted to present growing up to be something that's liberating, exciting, and not something that would consume you in a bad way. It was age-appropriate and parents trusted us at Nick to be aware of our targeting a very narrow demographic.

WILL MCROBB: What's the point of being safe? Let's be raw. We weren't educational TV, for sure. We hoped our irreverence and the voice we were speaking in would inspire kids. I don't know if kids still read *MAD* magazine anymore, but all of us were sparked by *MAD* and National Lampoon in a formative time in our lives. We just wanted to bring that spirit to kids and wanted them to question authority while being clever. And to not take anything too seriously.

HARVEY: When we were in Philly with *Double Dare*, the stage crew were just as eccentric as . . . I mean, you would never let your children near them if you had any. They looked like what would be hanging out at a bus station and sleeping under a tree or bench. But they were rock-

and-roll stage crew guys who also did television. You know what roadies are like.

KENAN THOMPSON: The crew members were our favorite people. They were always laughing, always seemed a little edgier. Be cool with the tatted-up guys, the guys walking around with drills and hammers. And you learn your professionalism from everyone else.

BYRON TAYLOR: On *Double Dare*, we didn't use the same green slime that Geoffrey Darby used on *You Can't Do That on Television*, because if it sat on stage under the hot lights, an oatmeal-based slime would bake like a rock. And if we didn't get that off the set, we'd have chunks of greenish plaster. We used applesauce. That was my favorite, with a little bit of food coloring, little milk powder. Something to make it opaque.

DANA CALDERWOOD: GAK was just sort of a general term they came up with.

BYRON TAYLOR: One of the crew in Philly started calling it GAK and everyone followed. I can't remember his name, but his nickname was Skunkhead because he had a punkish strip dyed down the middle of his head.

GEOFFREY DARBY: There was no genius of Will McRobb or someone in New York coming up with "GAK." All I will say is it came from the stage crew. *They* called it GAK. And we picked it up. That's the story. Now, where the *stage crew* got the name from, I'm not telling. Sorry.

MARC SUMMERS: In 1986 to 1990, we had, shall we say, a "colorful" crew. I love them dearly, and found them to be some of the smartest people I've ever worked with throughout my career. But without mentioning names, there was a certain amount of recreational drug activities going on, and "gak" is the street name for heroin. And that's where it came from. Klinghoffer and me laughed our asses off, because Nickelodeon apparently didn't do their research and didn't know. And when we told them, they about shit themselves. "Should we pull this stuff off the market, or what the hell do we do?" So they were hoping that it never got out, and apparently it never did.

GEOFFREY DARBY: I wasn't there on *Hey Dude* for the "tequila story." There's a different story for why I stopped drinking . . .

GRAHAM YOST: We had one night when it got really stupid and we decided to play indoor mini-golf. From Dave Brisbin's room to Alan Goodman's room at the Ramada. Whoever sank a putt had to drink a shot of tequila. We got absurdly drunk and then had a script read-

through at ten the next morning. The three of us were *so* hungover and were looking at each other saying, "We are the stupidest people in the world."

ERIK MACARTHUR: I thought *Salute Your Shorts* was cool, and we had a good time. But the people running it were a little bit crazy and it was a little bit nuts. This was a time when there was a lot of coke going around. It tells you what that time was in the nineties. People walking around with big block cell phones, playing it up Hollywood-style and stuff. But we had a blast.

MICHAEL BOWER: There was drug use on the set. Not from the cast—just some of the older people. I don't really appreciate that. I have an alcoholic brother—he's changed his life for the better now—but it was something that crept its way into the show. It was sad to see, but you can't control everybody.

TREVOR EYSTER: I didn't even know about it until I got filled in a little later on. None of it was of such use that it put anyone at risk. I have nothing but *amazing* things to say about the crew.

COURTNEY CONTE: I don't remember any of that. Not that I recall. I'm sure they had beer and stuff, but I don't remember drugs.

KIRK BAILY: I never *once* saw that on set. It might have been kept from me, but I never saw it. We made one or two trips to Vegas—the crew—when we needed a break from this inane and hilarious show, but it wasn't outrageous partying. It was just hanging out together.

KEVIN KUBUSHESKIE: There was a time when Roger Price called an impromptu meeting of the crew, and being the protective—and maybe a little crazy—guy he was, he brought a gun to the meeting, announcing that if anyone tried to give or sell drugs to any of the kids on the show, he would kill them. There was, of course, less laughter in the studio that day.

BLAKE SENNETT: I don't want to say *Salute Your Shorts* felt less professional, because that sounds negative and that's not how I feel. But it felt like summer camp. It was laid-back. I got into that vibe, and I was showing up half an hour late every single day. Eventually, Courtney Conte called me into his office and basically said, "You can't be late anymore." I was taken aback. I thought the vibe was so chill! "We're just riding the wind, man!"

DAVE RHODEN: You got to remember, here we are—these kids in ninth grade with a driver who's assigned to us to take us out for meals and/or our own catering service, and an entire theme park that was our

backyard to play in.

KENAN THOMPSON: All these free clothes and these access badges where we could sneak into Universal Studios. It was an "access granted" situation. That was some serious shit, you know what I'm sayin'?

DAVE RHODEN: Eventually you're making more money than your schoolteacher. Teenagers are probably hard enough to raise, and then you throw in some extra benefits they're not used to handling. We could *all* get a little cocky and arrogant.

ADAM WEISSMAN: Imagine you're a substitute teacher in seventh or eighth grade. You have a classroom full of kids and you not only have to instantly become the leader of the group in a way that makes them engaged, but you also have to get them to do their jobs, and you have technical considerations, and limited hours because they're minors and can only work a certain number of hours a day. It's very challenging.

DAVE RHODEN: Something we didn't catch right away was that every single thing we said was picked up by the boom mic, which means every director, producer, soundman, *anybody* listening, heard it. I think it was season two when Chris Lobban—who was always kind of a hothead—was kind of pissed off about the directing or something like that and was bitching about it behind the set one day between cuts. Somebody brought him aside and told him, "Hey, you gotta chill out, because everyone is listening to what you're saying."

MARK SCHULTZ: The adolescent ego can't handle being corrected in front of their friends, certainly not in front of a live audience.

JASON ZIMBLER: Our show was *hot*. We led off Saturday Night Nick and were prime time. We were the top-rated show on the network. A lot of teenagers let me know that when I was out of the house and walking around the city. Those were fun times. We were swept up in *that*.

ERIK MACARTHUR: I definitely got a lot of girls because of *Salute Your Shorts*. It wasn't a popular show, but it was later on when it paid off. Fans who were twenty-two. I was better-looking at fourteen.

SEAN O'NEAL: When I finished the show, I was sixteen and had friends that had been involved in "extracurricular activities," let's call them. I jumped into what I *wanted* to do instead of what I *should have* been doing, because I wasn't on a schedule at that point. Most of my friends did use it to pick up girls, rather than me. I never even had to worry about it. My friends would always bring the girls around, because they were always talking about me. It was hilarious. I was grateful that

Clarissa came along.

MITCHELL KRIEGMAN: The level of facility at which Melissa had to perform, her endurance, was amazing. She was never cranky. I had to be sensitive to whether she'd be tired. And my heart always went out to her for her good nature.

JOE O'CONNOR: I got a little concerned sometimes that they were working her a little too hard. One time they brought her in even though she had a really bad cold. I said, "What are you doing here?" And she goes, "I told them I wanted to come to work." Well, I went upstairs and just yelled at those guys. I was so pissed off. I lost my temper and shouldn't have, but she's a little girl and she's sick, and should have been home.

ALISON FANELLI: I got the flu on "Yellow Fever," and we were right in the middle of shooting. I just *went down*. Quick, raging fever. So on that episode, there's a lot of shots where Ellen would have been sitting on the bus and they just had to position other characters or extras around the seat so you don't notice Ellen's not there. There was a scene where we were getting on the bus and I know I'm sick when I see it, because when I turn to look at Pete, I had that stiff neck.

TIM LAGASSE: The tough thing about working in children's television is what you're *not* allowed to do. In *Allegra's Window*, I played a baker called Mr. Cook . . . and we couldn't show a stove. They didn't want children getting used to being near a stove. My set was a kitchen. But we couldn't have a stove in it.

D.J. MACHALE: We did ninety-one episodes of *Are You Afraid of the Dark?* and there were ninety-one campfires. And you never saw anyone actually strike a match to light that fire, because they didn't want to teach kids how to strike matches. They were afraid someone would burn their house down or something like that. So the campfire was already lit when they showed up.

JASON ALISHARAN: That's definitely true, especially because by the end of season one, the trees on the set were dying and they'd have to spray-paint them.

JOANNA GARCIA: I was kind of intrigued by the way the fairy dust we threw into the fire to make it flame was a combination of Carnation instant milk and glitter or something like that. I was also kind of grossed out because it got really sticky. I think it was a combination of all of our grimy paws in the little bag. And the heat.

D.J. MACHALE: It was Cremora, the nondairy creamer. It was petroleum-

based, and actually burns. Then we also added some pyrotechnics to the fire itself.

JOANNA GARCIA: I trusted our prop guys. I felt we were in pretty good hands.

JASON ALISHARAN: Not that our production company, Cinar, would want me to remind them of this—what do they care, they're bankrupt—but I think one season we were shooting in a warehouse with walls lined with asbestos. Probably not the best way to maintain a forest.

BYRON TAYLOR: Once MTV Networks saw *Double Dare* and knew what it was, there was a risk management guy who reviewed all the obstacles. I'm sure he was just aghast at what we were trying to do: Everybody should be in a helmet, and we needed padding on this and that . . . There was only so much of that we could do.

MARY HARRINGTON: The big Standards thing was imitable material. That was a tough one.

PAUL GERMAIN: Tommy was walking out onto a cleaning thing outside an office in a big tower, and Nick said, "You can't do that." Eric Clapton's kid had just been killed, so people were really sensitive to that kind of danger. Interestingly, Nick almost *never* had notes for us. But Arlene Klasky did, and we'd have conflicts. She was always saying kids shouldn't do this or kids should do that. And I was always arguing with her about it.

JOE ANSOLABEHERE: One time Arlene came back to me with a note saying I used the "*s* word." "I *did*?" Turns out she meant "stupid."

CRAIG BARTLETT: Nick wasn't bothered by the fact that the parents on *Rugrats* kept leaving the kids alone so that we could start them talking. That could be seen as pretty reprehensible behavior on the parents' part.

MITCHELL KRIEGMAN: There was never a doubt the parents loved them. And twenty years ago, we were less paranoid than we are now about children being left alone. But the conceit of the show was that the "rugrats" lived in their own world. The parents might be sitting inside, and the kids are out in the backyard "on the moon."

MARY HARRINGTON: They weren't abandoning the babies. They were just always leaving them with Grandpa, who would always fall asleep. They were well intentioned. No babies got harmed in the making of *Rugrats*.

MELANIE CHARTOFF: It was comedy, folks. With a really clear statement

of intentions for audiences hip enough to get it.

BYRON TAYLOR: I'm sure enough kids tried jumping off their roof with a cape because they watched *Superman* in the fifties. We did a thing on *Double Dare* where we had a stuffed cat that we swung by its tail and tried to get through a window, or some crazy stunt. But that never reappeared. There was a thing about feeding a baby—a realistic kind of doll that was splattered with food—and not only was it hard for Marc out there by himself judging these kinds of things, but it was also just a bad idea: kids throwing food at their younger siblings if they tried to re-create it at home with a real baby.

MARC SUMMERS: I used to have parents stop me and yell at me about, *My kids ruined my living room!* Or, *They built an obstacle course and put coffee grounds on my carpet!* My response to them was, "Be a parent. My job is to host TV shows. If you can't rule your kids, that's not my problem."

ABBY HAGYARD: I guess I could say "self-righteous" people would come up and say, "I don't approve of your show, you know." Well, here's a thought: *Don't watch it!*

ARON TAGER: My son-in-law had a neighbor who was visiting with his kid, and the kid was really freaked out by me. He was too young. He shouldn't have been watching *Are You Afraid of the Dark?* That was one thing I said later about that kind of thing: I blame the *parents*. You have to check in on those things once in a while. The kid was quite young. That was distressing.

BYRON TAYLOR: The big hope on *Double Dare* was that things wouldn't break. That was always in the back of our minds. There were times when things did fail and we didn't really expect it. The first time I saw something like that, we had a dad who did an old stunt, which was breaking eggs on his forehead. He was going so fast, he smashed the shell right into his forehead. He had a piece of shell embedded, and there was blood coming down.

BOB MITTENTHAL: Early on, one of the bleachers collapsed. I don't think anyone was badly hurt.

MIKE KLINGHOFFER: I don't think the bleacher collapsed. I believe one of the arms came off the side of the bleacher and someone fell off. I don't remember there being a lawsuit that came from it. I don't remember giving testimony; that's why I say that.

BOB MITTENTHAL: It just stands out as an accident you wouldn't want to happen on your show. I understand the man had cut his penis. I'm

sure he was fine. Probably got a nice gift out of it.

MIKE KLINGHOFFER: I think in the five hundred episodes we did, only one kid ever broke his arm on the obstacle course. He lied on his form: He had broken that arm before.

MARC SUMMERS: The show never aired it. The kid lied on his application where it asked if they'd ever had any broken bones. The kid has glass bones. He had broken his arm, like, seven times. He slipped on the floor and his bone went right through his arm. I ran out of the studio.

DANA CALDERWOOD: Here's this kid who knows he's fragile but wants to be on *Double Dare* so much that he's going to do it come hell or high water. We all admired him for doing it.

MARC SUMMERS: His father was a lawyer, and the kid had only gotten to, like, Obstacle Six based on the fact that he fell down this thing. The father came to me and said, "Large-screen TV for Obstacle Seven, or I could sue you. Which would you rather have?" We gave him the TV . . . and then screened every application after that. If anybody's parent was a lawyer, we wouldn't let them on the show.

HARVEY: No kid was ever a poor sport. And we're talking hundreds and hundreds of kids. The only ones who were a pain in the ass were the *parents*.

MARC SUMMERS: In *Family Double Dare*, we had parents who would pin their kids up against the wall. *"I needed that car and you screwed it up!"* They'd grab the kid by the neck. We'd have to separate the parents from the kids.

HARVEY: A lot of stuff would get revealed there. We could really see sometimes what didn't look like a good relationship. I'd feel bad for the kid, but of course there wasn't anything we could do except try to make the kid feel better in that one moment.

MARC SUMMERS: We were out on the road one year in Philadelphia, and we used to pie the parents like crazy. If the parents weren't hit in the face hard enough from my perspective, I would say, "That's not how you do it! *This* is how you do it!" And I would really trash the parents. We do the show on Sunday, and by Wednesday I get the call from the Viacom attorneys: "Do you remember Philadelphia, when you threw a pie in a parent's face? She's suing because she said she can't have sex anymore." And I started to laugh my ass off. Seriously? They ended up giving her $25,000 to go away. Once you're successful, people try to screw you.

DONNIE JEFFCOAT: We made it through sixty episodes of *Wild & Crazy*

Kids pretty unscathed. It was when I did the traveling live shows with Marc Summers and Mike O'Malley that I started getting hurt. We'd be doing the slime and whipped cream stuff and they would be mopping up. I slipped a couple of times and fell straight on my back. One day in the middle of a sentence, I fell off a thirteen-foot drop into an orchestra pit, I think in Alaska. I couldn't walk for several days.

SEAN O'NEAL: There was an episode of *Clarissa* where I fell off the window. But honestly, the toughest part was getting up. I had to lie on my back and wait for my cue, then time how long it took to get up. I had to hunch over my knees as I made my appearance.

ALISON FANELLI: I got to do my own stunts on *Pete & Pete*. I got strapped to a car in a bunny suit going thirty miles an hour.

MICHAEL BOWER: Every time we had a stunt or something like that, Kirk Baily would throw his whole body into it. He wouldn't care. When we saw him really commit to everything, some of us decided to work harder, because that really came through.

KIRK BAILY: There was a scene with Christine Cavanaugh, who played Mona, and she's in the boat and I make the decision to jump in after her. And I'm supposed to dive off the dock into what was two feet of muck water. I grew up a swimmer, so I know how to dive . . . and I remembered that my friend from high school had tucked his head and broken his neck in shallow water at a lake, so I turn my head to the right to make sure I wasn't tucking my head. And my head hit the water so perfectly that I blew out my eardrum. They got me up and they said, "Are you okay?" I said I was okay, but my left ear started gushing blood. They took me to the hospital, and I ended up having three surgeries to repair my eardrum. Which still isn't working.

ROBIN RUSSO: On one of the road shows, Marc fell and he got hurt. He had to be taken out on a stretcher! Marc lost a little bit of hearing that day. He fell *hard*. I had to do the show myself, and it was funny because everyone thought my job was really easy and fun. It wasn't that difficult, but I don't think they realized until I had to step into Marc's role and they had to step into mine how much it took for Marc and I to work together as a team.

MICHELLE TRACHTENBERG: There was a scene with a bunch of us—the motley crew—walking to a fence. We're supposed to drag because it was the hottest, longest day of the year. And there was a boy who had ADD and his parent didn't watch him and he went and had like twenty sugar packets from the craft service table. When "action" was called, he got really upset because the director told us to go really,

really slow. I was going slowly, and he shoved me down and ran to the fence because he was on a sugar high. I happened to fall on my knee and slice it open on a piece of glass that randomly was there. So I've always had a scar on my knee from that one day. I went to my school trailer, put a bunch of Band-Aids on it, and said, "We gotta finish the scene!" Finally, when we were done with the whole day, when I got into the car to go home at night, I burst out in tears: *Oh my God, it hurts so much!* That is one of my most vivid *Pete & Pete* memories, funnily enough.

MIKE KLINGHOFFER: At the end of the show, kids would go up and hug Marc, and they were all messy. We always assumed he hated it because it meant he had to go and change outfits. We knew he was clean and neat, but never really put the OCD thing together with that.

HARVEY: It's pretty astounding that a guy with OCD ended up on one of the messiest shows to date on television. Is that irony or what?

ROBIN RUSSO: Everyone always said, "How did you not know he had OCD?" Back then, we didn't call it OCD. I just knew that he was "neat." He would iron his pants before he would go on stage. I traveled with him when we were doing the road shows, so I probably knew him better than anybody. And he never once got upset about getting messy.

MARC SUMMERS: Nobody understands. First of all, the whole thing has been blown so far out of proportion—that I had this horrible time, that I couldn't deal with it . . . *Bullshit!* I never had one bit of a problem. And if I had, I could've talked to *anybody* on the set about it.

DANA CALDERWOOD: I asked him about it later, and he said he would just have to wait until he could get out of there and go to the hotel to take a hot shower. He said, "It was terrible for me sometimes, but I did it because I knew that's what the show was and I wanted to make the show good."

GERRY LAYBOURNE: I mean, that's extraordinary that he would be part of such a messy show and have this medical condition. He was always helpful, always participated in anything we wanted to do on the network, any Big Help or initiatives that we had.

MARC SUMMERS: After it came out and I talked about it, Gerry Laybourne called me to apologize. I said, "Apologize for *what*?" And she went, "I had no idea." And I said, "You know what? Neither did I."

WENDY LITWACK: There are certain things that you do where you make a

lot of money, and then there are certain things you do for the art. The most attractive thing about jumping into a project at Nickelodeon was they gave you the freedom to create. You didn't know if it would really ever bring you *monetary* rewards, but it would certainly be creatively fulfilling.

HARVEY: When I auditioned it was 1986, and I remember asking if *Double Dare* was a union show. And they said no. Word got back to me that if I wanted to do it union, they would cast somebody else. "Well, I'm not doing anything else at the moment. Fine!"

DAMIAN YOUNG: This was one of the first TV gigs I had. I'd done some equity regional theater, but mostly what I was doing was for free. I didn't care at that point. "Somebody wants me? Fantastic."

ABBY HAGYARD: Most actors would work for *food*. I didn't have a problem with the money. Les was happy. The kids didn't have a problem with the money. They were all ten. They were making better money than they could've hoped for from a paper route, that's for sure.

ROGER PRICE: I know some parents thought we were paying the kids too much money. But we paid them the union rate plus 10 percent. This was a requirement of Canadian law.

CHRISTINE MCGLADE: It was probably $260 a week. We didn't know any different, and we were having fun.

JOE O'CONNOR: In terms of negotiating what we made, our contract was so confusing our *agents* had a hard time of understanding it.

MICHAEL KOEGEL: Rich Ross and I would be sitting in our offices making up numbers to pay these kids. "What should we offer Melissa for a third year of *Clarissa*? Is $150 an episode enough of a bump?" We were making it up! There was no template. We were completely on our own, non-union, and there was no Big Brother to ask questions of. Once the contracts were signed, we went ahead and did it.

ANNETTE LESURE: Everybody would be complaining because of the pay scale, but I was thinking, "Holy crap, it pays!" It was, like, my first big job, so it was exciting.

TIM LAGASSE: Nickelodeon likes young people who don't have much experience, because they're *cheap*.

JOE O'CONNOR: I have to say Nickelodeon did and continues to do a brilliant job of sort of masking that fact. Not that anybody really cares anymore, because it doesn't matter anymore. But Nickelodeon has

always done a wonderful job of making it seem like they were some benign almost nonprofit. It's really brilliant marketing. It just becomes, *Gosh darn it, they're really interested in kids!*

MICHAEL BOWER: We didn't get *nothing*. We were really, really screwed. Looking back on it now—especially in comparison to working at NBC—we really worked for free. When they were going to do a third or fourth season, all of the actors said we needed more money. Nickelodeon wasn't having it. Steve Slavkin stood up for everyone, saying we weren't asking for that much more. He walked off set in protest about two weeks early, and I guess Nick wasn't happy. It just ended. We knew something was up, because the creator of the show wasn't on set for three weeks.

TREVOR EYSTER: Cable television contracts are very different than network, so this idea that all of us got rich is certainly unfounded.

MICHAEL KOEGEL: Residuals was something we never could have afforded. If someone was union and wanted to work non-union, that was a different thing. But we couldn't give them a union contract. If you work with union actors, you acknowledge unions exist, and if you acknowledge this, unions come and force you to work with them all of the time. Financially, we could have never done that.

COURTNEY CONTE: One time, we had the teamsters try to strike us. They heard we were non-union, so they started honking their horns on their trucks so we couldn't roll audio. I had to go talk to them. Thank *God* I'm third-generation show business; I knew most of these goombahs. They went peacefully, but do you know what a teamster contract would do to an $180,000-an-episode show? It would have killed the show.

GEOFFREY DARBY: John Kricfalusi complained to some reporter at *Variety* or something that the only creative thing Nickelodeon ever did was create a deal where they owned the product. And they challenged me with that and my answer was, "Look, I'm the Devil." It's really simple: You can do the deal with me and have your series made, *or* there's a person standing behind you who will do it. It's very simple. I'm the Devil. I'd admit it. I'm the Devil, okay? Do the deal with the Devil: It's your choice. And if I'm the Devil, *fine*!

JOHN KRICFALUSI: I just wish I could get a cut of it all.

ANDY BAMBERGER: Within three years of leaving Nickelodeon, I made maybe $50,000 more a year. We all were completely underpaid for what we did. I don't know what Gerry got, but I saw all the budgets, and it was pretty much the same amount of money. There was a bump

up when we became successful in 1994/95 doing *All That* and those kinds of shows. But before then, as far as I know, nobody was pocketing a big salary at Nickelodeon.

ROBIN RUSSO: Things got really big on *Double Dare.* When we were doing our live shows, it was like a concert, so security was right in front of us. People would run up, and whether it was a kid or parent handing us boxes or flowers, we were never allowed to touch that stuff. Security had to look through it all. One guy did get upset when he was trying to give me flowers and he kept going, *Well, what do you think I'm like?* And I'm like, "You don't understand. They have to check everything that comes through!" I was escorted off the live shows numerous times because there was something going on in the audience.

FRED KELLER: We had fans of *Hey Dude*, and there was a report of some guy who was sending inappropriate notes.

KELLY BROWN: I left the business because of these stalker situations. It scared me too much. It was very strange.

FRED KELLER: We were fortunate because we were isolated: Anyone approaching the sets could be seen pretty clearly, if they were part of the crew or not. We had to be a bit more conscious about security, that kind of thing. It never got in the way of shooting. The actors were all wanting to do their best. There may have been some stressful times back at the hotel, but certainly not when we were shooting.

GEOFFREY DARBY: I knew about Kelly's stalkers and then had to deal with it from New York and not from Arizona, so that was a problem. We had to deal with police and that kind of stuff. But I had to deal with it as a television executive and not as a person on the ground at the Tanque Verde Ranch.

JACOB TIERNEY: I had gotten these weird stalker notes on Facebook from people who liked *Are You Afraid of the Dark?*, which is why I changed my page name. But it took me half the day to figure out that it was Rachel Blanchard, because I wasn't expecting that from her.

ANDREA LIVELY: We only did two seasons of *Nick Arcade*, but even so, there were a lot of little kids who grew up on it. Karim Miteff called me and asked if I knew a person who had contacted him about me. I told him the guy was someone who had watched *Nick Arcade* and would call in to the radio station where I worked. Then Karim said, "He's a grown man now, and he's calling me asking about private information about you." Years later, a lot of these kids grow up and become weirdos. It doesn't matter if you're über-famous or not. So I'm

thinking, “Thank *goodness* people don’t know what I look like!”

KELLY BROWN: I would come home every summer and work in my family business, and it was very strange to have people come up: “Can I have your autograph?” You can’t shut it off. You can’t be a normal person and then be that person who walked the red carpet. I didn’t like the attention on me. I wasn’t comfortable with that. It wasn’t going to be a lifestyle for me.

RITA HESTER: While we were on the air with *Roundhouse*, we had to replace Crystal Lewis, who went back to her gospel career. And then Dominic Lucero died, which was so tragic.

BENNY HESTER: Dominic was one of our favorites, and was just great in Florida. When he got sick, it was kind of a mystery for a long time. We kept thinking he’d be coming back. Rita and I were the first to realize that that wasn’t going to happen. It affected everybody.

DAVID SIDONI: We were roommates in Florida together. Before *Roundhouse*, we’d gotten really close doing *Newsies*. He was one of, if not my *best*, friend. I knew he wanted to do *Roundhouse*; I was there with him in his house when Michael Jackson called and asked him to come back on the road with him because Dominic had been a backup dancer on the *Bad* tour. He was getting a chance to have his talents on display with our show. And now it was cut short, along with everything else in his life. He had gotten some kind of virus infection or something that was cancerous. When we came back and did the next episodes, we tried to honor him as much as we could. But it was tough. I’d lost a dear, dear friend. Every week, I wanted to make him proud.

JULENE RENEE-PRECIADO: He was twenty-five. My daughter was born after he passed away, so I named her middle name—Dominique—after him. It was a huge loss for the *Roundhouse* family.

HEATHER SHEFFIELD: When we lost Dominic, the heart of the show was gone. We’d been through so many wars with the network, and it got harder to do budget-wise. And from a logistical standpoint of doing a live show every week. Had they renewed the show for another season, we would have found a way to make it continue, but at his memorial, we all felt that this was the end of things.

ALBIE HECHT: When I came aboard, *Roundhouse* was still in production and was having a pretty turbulent production. The staff there was in turmoil. I think they had internal problems between the producers.

SHAWN DAYWALT-LUTZ: It really wasn’t like that. On a professional level,

it really worked well.

SHEILA LAWRENCE: Whenever someone new joined the show, there was definitely a raised eyebrow when they heard about the Buddy-Benny-Rita triangle, but it was never ever a problem in terms of getting a show done.

HEATHER SHEFFIELD: At times it was contentious—as it would be with any three producers—but my parents are who they are, and all three of them brought a piece of the puzzle to the show. I don't know that I'd do it again in a professional capacity, but at the time it was pretty unique.

HERB SCANNELL: We dealt with all of them, but Rita and Buddy primarily. It was a tough production. When you have an ex-wife and her current husband writing the music, her ex-husband writing the comedy . . . and she has to pull it all together . . . She had a tough job. Did they all like each other? Probably not. But they put on a show each week, which was kind of remarkable.

JOHN CRANE: It was a double-edged sword. Rita and Buddy and Benny were so protective of that show that I don't think they were willing to compromise its creative integrity. This may have hastened the demise of the show.

MARK SCHULTZ: *Roundhouse* was the only show I asked to be excused from while working at Nick. It became clear to me early on that I didn't have anything in common with the people producing the show. The pilot episode had so much promise with the band, the dancers, and it was so electric with the glow of a supernova . . . But from that point forward, it didn't sustain for me. And I was anxious to get off it.

ALBIE HECHT: The show was constantly over budget and behind schedule. That, combined with the rating, which was not overwhelming, led us to think we would move on to something else that might achieve better results.

RITA HESTER: When they cut us off at fifty-two episodes and replaced us with *All That*, it was difficult for us. Right at the end of our last season, record executives had been showing up. We had four albums in the works with Giant Records. They even put a poster inside a cereal box of the *Roundhouse* cast with a big sticker on it that said the date of the record release. Suddenly, Nick canceled the show and said no to the record deal. I'm not bitter, because I love the fact Nick gave us the opportunity to do something on TV that might never have been done. But we had a clothing line all ready to go called Rebel Tags. We had an agreement with Pace Management to do a thirty-city tour with

a huge advance, and everything went away when the show got canceled.

HERB SCANNELL: All that stuff had been talked about, but I didn't know if it was actually going to happen.

BENNY HESTER: The tour was already sold in advance and the record contracts were already issued. We'd named the first cast album. Howard Benson, who's a very well-known record producer, worked with me on it for weeks.

HERB SCANNELL: The ratings for *Roundhouse* were never as high as the other shows'.

BUDDY SHEFFIELD: The ratings were always good; I don't think it was that. I never understood the politics going on there and why certain decisions were made, why the show was canceled.

BENNY HESTER: Robbie Rowe had ambitions other than being a Nickelodeon executive . . . and eventually her husband put *All That* into our time slot—which kind of speaks for itself.

JOHN CRANE: Always hovering over us was the idea that Nick would rather have a sketch show with kids as the stars. When it happened, it wasn't a surprise. We knew that was always the case.

HERB SCANNELL: We felt like we'd fulfilled what we said we would do, which was getting to a certain number of shows and either move on or spin off. That was our business model: fifty-two or sixty-five, then move on and try something else.

RITA HESTER: It was a difficult pill to swallow for us.

JOE ANSOLABEHERE: When I came onto *Rugrats*, Steve Viksten and I wrote the second episode together. We didn't really know what was going on, but very quickly it became clear that there was a problem in a way, a disconnect between Paul, Gabor, and Arlene. That triangle.

PAUL GERMAIN: I'm a strong personality, and as far as I'm concerned, *Rugrats* was my show that I would force my will on to push it in directions I wanted it to go. First of all, Arlene did not like Angelica. She thought the character was too mean and too cruel. *That* was a fight we had for a few months.

CHUCK SWENSON: Arlene didn't like her because Angelica was mean and was teaching kids meanness. The story guys' point of view was they we were using her as a *foil* for meanness.

GEOFFREY DARBY: You need that foil. You can't have everybody be nice,

because then it's just pabulum. And we wanted it to be *their* world and didn't want to make it so it was a negative *adult* foil. It needed to be a peer group foil.

CHERYL CHASE: I guess it wasn't any of my business. In the *New Yorker*, Arlene said how she hated this character. I didn't know that. Angelica was meaner in the Paul Germain era, and after he left, Arlene made Angelica sweeter and nicer. She didn't want the character to be a role model for her children. Personally, I think Angelica should have been the little brat, because you need to stir things up.

MELANIE CHARTOFF: Having known narcissistic kids of both genders, I felt the little bitch was pretty true to life and that Cheryl did a great job.

MARY HARRINGTON: It was really important to do research groups with *Rugrats*, and the moderator asked, "Should we take Angelica off of the show? Is she too mean?" And the kids *absolutely loved her*! It was a love-hate situation, the fantasy of getting back at the bullies. She's one of the most loved characters on the show, and we tested that time and time again.

CHERYL CHASE: Susan Sarandon was in the *Rugrats in Paris* movie and said on Rosie O'Donnell's show that Angelica was her favorite character. I found out from a friend doing makeup at a press junket that somebody asked Clint Eastwood if he watched his own movies at home. "Heck no. At my house, it's *Rugrats*. They're on all day. And Angelica's my favorite character." Everybody has an Angelica in their lives.

VANESSA COFFEY: If I'm not mistaken, she could be mean and conniving, but she would typically get in trouble for it.

CHERYL CHASE: I didn't think she was influencing kids the wrong way. Parents would tell me they used Angelica as an example of how *not* to behave.

STEVE VIKSTEN: Arlene would come in every morning at nine and leave every day at noon exactly. There was a maintenance guy at Klasky-Csupo—long-haired hippie guy in a tank top—whose job was to come in at noon and say, "Arlene, it's noon. It's time to go." We all started coming in later and later: I'd get there at ten thirty, eleven sometimes, hoping someone else would get in there first and have to deal with Arlene. She'd have all these notes, and it was usually, "Why are the babies fighting with each other? Why does Angelica say, 'You dumb babies'?" Which is a line I wrote. "Arlene, any TV show needs conflict; otherwise the audience gets bored." "I don't see why the babies can't

just get along."

CHERYL CHASE: People wanted me to say it all the time when I'd sign autographs. They'd want me to put it *on* the autograph. It's her tagline. It's iconic. Whenever I say it, it just brings people back.

VANESSA COFFEY: "You dumb babies" was about Angelica being jealous. Babies get a lot of attention and Angelica was jealous. She had her issues. She was raised by a mother who didn't give her a lot of attention, because she was a working mom who was on the phone all of the time. Angelica was a complicated character. We needed her. She added a lot.

STEVE VIKSTEN: I had to go through this every day for an hour if I got in there first. Eventually Arlene insisted that we take stuff out of it or she wouldn't approve the script. I told Paul, "I'm taking this out, but I'm coming to the recording session and I'll feed you the lines I took out. She won't even notice it." And that's what we did for years. Gabor wouldn't have cared—I don't even think he listened to the tracks.

PAUL GERMAIN: I never had any conflicts with Gabor. He wasn't that involved. He would often back us over Arlene. I kind of felt sorry for her. It was humiliating for her.

STEVE VIKSTEN: In defense of Arlene, she meant well. She just wanted her young kids to have entertainment that was really positive and helped people, but I wanted it to be funny. All of us writers were peas in a pod—there was a Harvard contingent and a UCLA contingent—and Paul was our quarterback.

PAUL GERMAIN: Instead of approaching it through the back door and trying to make things nice, I would challenge her. There was a writers' meeting where I said something ugly to Arlene, and for years I've regretted it. She said something that offended me, and I responded with something mean-spirited. After that, she just dropped out of the process. It was too much for her.

JOE ANSOLABEHERE: Paul and Viksten had written a script in which some surfer character says, "Killer price on the stereo dude!" And Arlene said they couldn't say the word "kill" or "killer." Paul later said he didn't even like the joke that much; he just wanted to fight with her. So he just screamed at her in that meeting, and she said, "Hey, look, I'm just trying to protect the children of America from you boys." And Paul said, "Who died and made you protector of America's children?" or something like that. And the look on Arlene's face was like, *I'm gonna kill you one day.*

MICHAEL BELL: As actors, I don't think any of us got involved in that. We showed up for work and didn't want to know what was going on behind the scenes. We didn't care that much.

CHUCK SWENSON: I left telling Arlene it was her studio and she should run it exactly how she wanted. I believe and still believe the essence of story is conflict, and she does not. She didn't need me to fight with. My life's too short and I didn't need it. "Find somebody else." And they did! *Rugrats* became quite successful. And I was quite happy.

GABOR CSUPO: Arlene could be difficult at times. But then so could I, probably.

LINDA SIMENSKY: Arlene was a talented, passionate individual. She yelled a lot. Gabor yelled a lot. There was a lot of yelling going on.

CHUCK SWENSON: I think Vanessa was on the other end of the phone. We had gone through something contentious, I can't remember what. But before the phone got hung up on our end—we were on speaker—Gabor said something like, "Fucking bitch." She took it with goodwill and grace. English is not Gabor's first language.

GABOR CSUPO: Arlene had it in her mind that she came up with the idea for the show, and she was being very protective of it and the way she thought it should be.

JOE ANSOLABEHERE: By about season three, it was like a war. And that was unfortunate because Arlene is not a bad person. She's a really nice person. Her heart was in the right place. It's just that she wasn't thinking about what would make the best show. She was thinking about not wanting her kids to say a bad word or something.

STEVE VIKSTEN: I think she honestly did what she thought was right, thinking she needed to be a good producer. I don't have any bad feelings at all. In fact, the last time I saw her was just before the letter came out in the *LA Times* . . .

CRAIG BARTLETT: After sixty-five episodes, production basically ended and everyone was cut loose and found other things to do. It got so popular in reruns, Nick decided to make a *Rugrats* movie and make new episodes to support that movie. So they geared back up. Without Paul. Paul's feelings were hurt that he wasn't asked to come back, and there was stuff about credit being due.

PAUL GERMAIN: I left *Rugrats* in 1992 or 1993. Right after that, I'd be looking for work and my agent would tell people he had one of the creators of *Rugrats*, Paul Germain. And she'd hear back from executives, "Oh, that's not what I heard." I was outraged because my

name was on the screen as one of the creators. All of a sudden, I was getting locked out. For reasons that were never made clear to me, as the show was getting bigger and bigger, my name was not being mentioned in these articles written about it in the *LA Times* or whatever it would be. People were pretending I didn't exist, and that was wrong. My entire writing staff had left by that time, and a bunch of them wrote a letter to the *LA Times*.

CRAIG BARTLETT: Somewhere in there—we were in the first season of *Hey Arnold!* by then—all the writers on *Rugrats* wrote a letter to the *LA Times* defending Paul's contribution to the series. There was a lot of pressure, and I signed it. All the writers signed it.

STEVE VIKSTEN: Right before it came out, I saw Arlene in the parking lot and said, "Hey Arlene." I walked up and I hugged her. We talked for a minute. The letter hit the next week and somebody told me she was furious about it. And she mentioned me. "I can't believe the last time I saw him he actually hugged me."

JOE ANSOLABEHERE: The only reason anybody knew Paul's name was it was on the credits. *Rugrats* had become this massive hit and he wasn't making any money off of it, and that didn't seem fair. It created this *huge* problem, because Arlene felt betrayed by us and then Nickelodeon was really mad at us. But we all felt like, "Okay, Paul gets credit for the show and Gabor and Arlene get credit for the show. And that's how it should be."

STEVE VIKSTEN: The letter was not against her or Gabor; it was just to set the record straight. They were going off saying they were the creators of *Rugrats*, and they didn't mention Paul. It was Paul's show! He had a guy editing dialogue tracks in his office all the time. And Paul would usually direct the actors.

CHERYL CHASE: I wasn't working with Arlene and Gabor, because Paul was the voice director. We were working with Paul specifically.

E. G. DAILY: He was very meticulous. He'd have us do it probably a zillion times. Kind of like George Miller, the director I worked with on *Happy Feet*. Paul had an insight on how to play these characters, which is why I think it was such a huge hit: He really understood the kids' mentality.

HOWARD BAKER: He could be a pain, but he just wanted every episode to be a success and that kept me on my toes.

PAUL GERMAIN: I directed all of the voice actors on the first sixty-five episodes. It was my booth and I ran it. Sometimes Arlene or somebody

would come in and quietly hand me a note, and I would either address it or not. What *Rugrats* was beyond "let's do a show about babies" was mine. I came up with it. Arlene designed Phil and Lil and she designed the characters Boris and Minka, and Gabor had pulled the design for Chuckie out of a drawer, but they were characters based on my writing.

LINDA SIMENSKY: I thought it was Arlene's idea.

GERRY LAYBOURNE: I will not take anything away from Paul, but it was Arlene's idea.

MARY HARRINGTON: It was Paul Germain's, Arlene Klasky's, and Gabor Csupo's show. But Paul Germain and Joe Ansolabehere ran it. I supervised the first one hundred episodes.

STEVE VIKSTEN: Any company like Viacom or Nick is going to be obsessed with controlling the press and protecting their brand. I understand that. But the truth is the truth. The letter was a recognition on our part, saying, "You have to recognize that a lot of the success of the show is based on the writing staff."

GEOFFREY DARBY: For the network to get involved in that, suddenly we're pulled into that mess and we don't want to be, because then we'd have to pick a side. Instead, we would say to Gabor and Arlene, "What the frick is going on down there? *And can you clean it up and get it out of the press?*"

JOE ANSOLABEHERE: Craig Bartlett kind of regretted signing it because of how upset Nickelodeon became. They didn't want it to become another John Kricfalusi thing. John was on *The Charlie Rose Show* and Howard Stern's show talking about Nickelodeon "screwing him over," and Nickelodeon didn't need any more bad press going on about one of their shows at the same time.

PAUL GERMAIN: I have three Emmys on my shelf for the work I did on *Rugrats*. If Nick was comfortable with allowing this pretense that I wasn't there and had nothing to do with it, that's too bad they felt that way about the truth.

GEOFFREY DARBY: Paul Germain really was the inventor of *Rugrats*. Not Arlene and not Gabor. I mean, he was working for them, so the three of them get a "created by." But he was the vision behind it. In story meetings and stuff, we could tell whose vision it was.

CHARLIE ADLER: I always felt Gabor and Arlene were very much involved in everything. Everything.

PETER CHUNG: Paul was much more involved in it creatively. Gabor and Arlene were running the studio, and they had to tend with Nick and their whole staff. They were doing *The Simpsons* at the time, and Gabor was very preoccupied by that while we were doing the *Rugrats* pilot.

GABOR CSUPO: I would say that is a fair assessment.

STEVE VIKSTEN: I read the letter a few years ago and couldn't believe how badly written it was. Eight writers and we can't fucking write a decent letter. We thought it would just be a minor thing. It was buried in a Saturday edition of the *LA Times*, but the crap hit the fan Monday morning. Somebody told me Herb Scannell spent the whole day on the phone, pacing in his office over this. I was worried about my job for about a week. I had no idea it was going to be that big of a deal. But they had a hit show with us. And nobody said anything. I never talked to Herb about it. It blew over.

HERB SCANNELL: They were all good people, but couldn't work together. And we continued to work with Klasky-Csupo. Paul went off and got a deal with Disney. A lot of productions have inner workings that are funky. Sometimes they work out and make good work. And sometimes they break apart. That one broke apart.

E. G. DAILY: We were all blessed to be part of such a great show, and *everybody* played a part in making it what it was. From Paul Germain to Peter Chung to Gabor Csupo and Arlene Klasky and all those characters . . . it was a *team* show, which is why it was so good.

BILL WRAY: John Kricfalusi was a great team captain. But he had a *helluva* team. And if he ever wants to do another great *Ren & Stimpy* episode, he's got to re-form the studio. And that's why another *Ren & Stimpy* episode will never be made. Because he'll never do that.

CHRIS RECCARDI: If something's great, it can't be stopped. "Man's Best Friend" is on DVD now. As long as the world gets to see it, everybody wins.

EDDIE FITZGERALD: When I hear stories about John being testy and saying these things, I'm sure he did. But honestly, who cares? We're all *so proud* that we worked on it. For a while, together we glimpsed art in the truest sense happen right before our eyes. And we were all part of it.

JOHN KRICFALUSI: Never in a million years did I imagine that any of the artists I trained and gave such great opportunities to would turn around and sell out the studio and the show that made them famous

and restored their artistic pride. A few years after the creator-driven heyday started by *Ren & Stimpy*, everything turned right around again, and those same artists were thrust back into an industry that places artists on the bottom rung of the ladder. There are a couple exceptions left—like *SpongeBob*, where the artists still have some say in the creative process—but the show has not evolved in quality or technique in the way that old cartoons did . . . and the way that *Ren & Stimpy* had been evolving episode by episode.

CHRISTINE DANZO: Everyone had the best intentions in the beginning but allowed some inexperience, mistrust, control-seeking, and lack of faith to cause production havoc and therefore the end of an inspired show idea. Remember: *It's only a cartoon.*

ALAN GOODMAN: They still throw slime around. But it's *very beautiful* slime. Heavily art-directed slime. That's what changed. Grown-ups took control of the slime and made it pretty.

VANESSA COFFEY: Two words: *Power Rangers*.

ALAN GOODMAN: The big change at Nickelodeon came after the vast success of *Dora the Explorer* and *SpongeBob*. Suddenly, there was exceptional wealth in licensed products. Billions and billions of dollars. Companies that get a taste for that want more and more. Before you know it, you are developing shows or acquiring programs that come with licensing attached. Like *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles*.

ADAM WEISSMAN: Audiences are getting bored. Writers have to come up with new ways to keep them interested. In 1993, there were no iPhones, no Internet. What distracted them and what got them in trouble and what kept them entertained was different than today. The shows now have to reflect that. Now you have *iCarly* and she has a web show. *Welcome Freshmen* came from a simpler time. And you can't go back to that.

DEE LADUKE: If what's going on now is not a golden age, it's because the people at Nick don't have to make it up anymore. They have a couple decades of experience to back it up.

FRED NEWMAN: Nickelodeon was kids playing in the sandbox at first. But once the lawyers get into things, it's all, "Who owns that piece of music and how can we exploit it?" And none of that was there when I was doing *Livewire*. I even kind of shied away from other Nickelodeon projects because Viacom got so whoop-ass on stuff. I'm sorry, I don't want to sound like a complaining old guy, but . . .

DANA CALDERWOOD: The same is true in *every* industry. Not just TV. I was there last week, and there's nothing but boardrooms. Hundreds of offices. They've become a *company* now. It used to be one floor and a couple of people coming up with goofy ideas.

SCOTT WEBB: One of the things that happens within a corporate structure is your boss becomes the customer. You start thinking what's gonna get approved or what's the thing that they want, and you stop thinking about the audience. Play is extremely risky and, I have to say, for the most part, completely discouraged within corporations now more than ever before. I mean, there's *no* playing happening at Nickelodeon now. I guarantee it.

MARC SUMMERS: It's not the fun, jovial place it once was. It's all about the bottom line and thinking a billion dollars as opposed to good programming. Nick from '86 until right before 2000 was great television. And then . . . they lost their way.

BYRON TAYLOR: There was only so much airtime during the day when we could run the Nickelodeon shows. There was only so much budget. We couldn't keep both Nick Studios Florida soundstages busy seven days a week to meet Universal's demands.

ANDY BAMBERGER: The final death throe for Nickelodeon Studios was—as always—a double-edged sword. We were now able to afford outside productions with bigger and better ideas . . . but they wanted to shoot their shows in LA and not come all the way to Florida.

BYRON TAYLOR: We contractually had to have something going on on the stages every day when the park and tour were open. Sometimes there was legitimate production going on. But when there wasn't, there was the necessity of creating the illusion there was. They called it "camera blocking." They had all *kinds* of names for it. They had PAs down there moving things around, looking busy . . .

ANDY BAMBERGER: In 2002, that was about the end of the studios. They sold off all the equipment, all the chairs, *everything*. I happened to be working on a show in Orlando at the time and went through there. They had Olmac from *Legends of the Hidden Temple*! I wanted to buy it, but my wife would've killed me.

ADAM WEISSMAN: The difference I feel is just the success of the shows. I work on shows now where I've worked with these crew people for seven, eight years. The same ones! That kind of loyalty is not necessarily common within a network. These people are all nice, they work their butts off, we all make a living, and we're proud of the shows.

ANDY BAMBERGER: Now because of *Clarissa* and some other shows being successful, we were able to pay more money to get better shows. That's when Brian Robbins came in with *All That* and those bigger and better shows. We could use DGA directors and AFTRA talent. But the

people who created those earlier shows that led to this success? They didn't get to enjoy it, because they weren't involved in the shows that happened at the next level.

MARK SCHULTZ: Too many of the original people had moved on, had felt the vibe changing. New people were in charge of the network, and new executives were coming in who had titles but not experience.

MICHAEL KOEGEL: A lot of the people who stayed there were middle-management people who rose to the top. Not very creative, but people who show up to work on time and know how to write an e-mail.

TIM LAGASSE: It's true: If you want to get into television, go to Nickelodeon and start in the mailroom and you'll be an executive in six months.

SCOTT WEBB: There's no real meaningful talent that exists within Nickelodeon, and there's no real industry leadership that happens there either. They've squandered everything that this foundation of branding gave them. They threw out the logo. They've pretty much thrown out everything that allowed them to be a business that had a powerful relationship with an audience that could live on like the greatest love affairs of history. They decided that was not as important as having MBAs driving business with PNLs and seeing how much money they can make. One of the axioms Gerry gave us—and this was the key to the kingdom: "If it's good for kids, it'll be good for business." Now, it's, "If it's good for business, then we'll make it good for kids."

ANDY BAMBERGER: We were all shocked when Gerry left, because she was the heart and soul of the network. Herb is a very thoughtful person, a very creative person, but it was an impossible set of shoes to fill, because Gerry was such a big personality and had been there so long.

HERB SCANNELL: How was I going to fill Gerry's *high heels*? People change. Some people who I thought would be with me left early and some people I never thought I'd get on with, I got on with. And we spent ten years doing some great things together. Before, we had just scratched the surface, and now we could build Nick into a really meaningful force in popular culture while continuing to make great stuff for kids. I didn't see my job as walking away from what Gerry had put down as foundation. I saw it as taking what she had laid and continuing to grow it. And that's what I did.

ALBIE HECHT: Herb really encouraged us to create this studio system where we became the fifth-largest in Hollywood.

CRAIG BARTLETT: Gerry mentored Herb into that spot. And Herb and I got along fine, too. But MTV Networks, Viacom, Nick—every year they got bigger and more corporate than the year before. While Herb was running things, it just grew more and more corporate, and less like you had that personal touch. It was probably just inevitable that that was the way it was going to go. It wasn't Herb's fault. Herb's Nick was still a great place to be, but each year it got bigger and more out of control.

ALBIE HECHT: People forget that Herb Scannell put Nick at Nite on the map. They forget how unbelievably successful Nick at Nite *was*. Herb understood how to program to any demographic. And Herb had been extraordinarily successful as a programmer and launching Nicktoons and SNICK under Gerry.

GERRY LAYBOURNE: When I left Nick, we had 56 percent of all kids viewing. We grew from having nothing to having 56 percent.

HERB SCANNELL: Gerry was the best. So when she left, it was sad. It was almost like a wake.

ALBIE HECHT: Sure, there were people unhappy about Gerry leaving. There was sadness there. A lot of unrest and worry about what would happen without Gerry at the head. There was definitely a lot of trepidation about Herb taking over, but I think he quickly established both his vision and his ability to collaborate.

HARDY RAWLS: When Gerry left, they lost a great believer not just in Nick but the way the programming should run.

JERRY BECK: When she interviewed me, she asked me what a good Nick movie would look like. I told her it wouldn't be like Disney; it would be like *Yellow Submarine*. The moment I said that, I got the job. She wanted us to go in a new direction. A year and a half into my being there, Gerry left the company and went to Disney for a few years. As soon as she left, the direction for Nick Movies completely changed. Out with the original stuff. "Oh, *Rugrats* is doing well on TV. Let's do a movie." I moved on because I wanted to do what Gerry had wanted to do: cool new stuff. Developing movies based on TV series wasn't what I wanted to do. I ended up going to Disney myself after that.

HERB SCANNELL: I knew she had been in contract negotiations. I had just put my mother in a nursing home, and so it was a tough week of stuff. I'd had my first kid six months earlier, so there was a lot going on in my life. I walked into the nursing home and was saying to myself, "I really want this job. I love Nickelodeon. I gotta go for it." I called Gerry and had dinner with her during Christmas break after she left. I

told her I really wanted it, and she said she didn't know that. Six weeks later, I got the job. I loved running Nick. We were the Little Engine That Could.

ALBIE HECHT: When you think what happened under Herb: Nick Movies, Nick Animation, Nick Records, the Big Help, licensing and business, the rise of Nick International, Nick Online, *Nick* magazine . . . It was all Herb's ambition to take this brand and express it in so many different ways, to "be present"—as he put it—in kids' lives and be able to touch them wherever they wanted to touch Nickelodeon.

TOMMY LYNCH: Things were getting bigger. Changes and new ways of doing things were happening every day. It was fun. Herb brought Albie Hecht in to be his head of production, and Albie is a passionate guy.

MICHAEL KOEGEL: I left there in '95, and when things started to change was when they brought in Albie Hecht. He changed the complete tone of what was happening at that place. He ruled by intimidation. And that is not what that network was about up to that point. He'd walk into your office, pound his fist, and say, "What's going on with your show?!" It was such a different vibe. It was difficult to be around a lot of that stuff.

TOMMY LYNCH: We did feel we had to have a hit every time we pitched a new show. The world was becoming more competitive. Disney Channel was getting some traction. Cartoon Network came into existence. The big three networks became creatively irrelevant, so it was on. It also became a fact that the kids' cable business became big business, so every decision had to be vetted by various departments. It wasn't bad. Just different.

DAVID STENSTROM: As with anything, if you do the same thing long enough, you become stilted and entrenched in one way of doing things. In order to grow, you have to change. And I think Nick has kept changing. The only thing that doesn't like changing is a wet baby.

LISA LEDERER: Unfortunately, I feel like in the nineties it all started to clamp down again. Everything became very particular and subscribed, and the parameters all narrowed again. When you turn the television on, it doesn't really matter what sitcom you're looking at: Everybody is dressed pretty much the same way. Their hair's the same and the look is the same.

LARRY SULKIS: The stuff I see on Nickelodeon today over my kids' shoulders, I don't know whether they're watching Cartoon Network,

Nickelodeon, or Disney. Whatever Nickelodeon's particular signature is right now, I'm not hip to it.

CHRIS VISCARDI: That's only grown over the years. If you look at what Nickelodeon and Disney Channel air now—I'm not besmirching them at all; they're successful in fantastic ways—they're programming to a much larger audience. And their programming is straight down the middle. At times you see stuff that's really different and quirky and edgy and odd. But for the most part, that kind of stuff is not there anymore.

WILL MCROBB: We had tried to be the anti-Disney, now they're just trying to be Disney. To me, that's the arc from where it was to where it is now.

ALAN GOODMAN: They got seduced by the success of Disney's shows with older tweens and teens living fantasy lives. Wizards, a rock star in disguise, twins who live in a palace. But you can't beat Disney doing "dreams come true." They've been doing that since *Pinocchio*. And you end up blowing off the younger part of the demographic that identifies with the "regular kid" stories—bucking the establishment—that were always Nickelodeon's forte.

BOB MITTENTHAL: I work for both of them, and I think there's still some elements that make Nickelodeon more risk-tasking than Disney.

ADAM WEISSMAN: I just finished a show at Disney where the lead actors got a Kids' Choice Award . . . *on Nickelodeon*. Kids don't care. They're going to watch what they're going to watch. It's healthy competition. The Rolling Stones and the Beatles made really good music. Nick just took this other tack.

DANNY TAMBERELLI: The age of children's television is really going. I don't think it feeds your brain in the way it used to. Shows like *Pete & Pete* and *Clarissa* and *Salute Your Shorts* had sort of a quirky, not-straight-ahead quality. And that's not how it is now.

WILL MCROBB: Everything's about wish fulfillment now: becoming famous or popular. What was great about *Pete & Pete* is we glorified *being a kid*. There aren't too many shows that glorify what it's like to hang out in your backyard with your friends trying to figure out what to do for the day.

ALAN GOODMAN: Things like "Nickelodeon Takes Over Your School" was terrific promotion for us back in those days. There was a toy run where we had the whole wish-fulfillment thing for a child. They got to run wild through a toy store for five minutes and grab anything that

they could grab. All of those things were feeding this notion of, *I'm a kid and the world is mine*. That's kind of what our orientation was.

MIKE KLINGHOFFER: Very early on, we did *Rated K*, which ran for a bunch of seasons.

ANDY BAMBERGER: Which spun off from *You Can't Do That on Television* in a way, because we could have kids reviewing things with kid opinions. Kids would listen to kids, we found out.

MIKE KLINGHOFFER: And on *Rated K* we did something called "Big Ballot," which eventually gave birth to the Kids' Choice Awards. Fred and Alan will say they created Kids' Choice Awards—they created the name—but it all comes out of *Rated K*.

ALAN GOODMAN: Yes, my partners at the time—Albie Hecht, Fred Seibert—and I created the Kids' Choice. We still get a credit on the show.

HERB SCANNELL: The Kids' Choice was Albie Hecht and Fred/Alan.

ALBIE HECHT: It's one of the most proud things I've ever done in my life, but it didn't start well. Fred and Alan were friends of mine from college, and they invited me to start this company with them, Chauncey Street Productions, and go in to do my first big pitch with them. I thought I had something great and came up with a great model and sketch, and I go in to meet Gerry—who I had never met but is a *legend*—and Darby—who I admired from *You Can't Do That on Television* and *Double Dare* . . . I go in there and pitch this big idea where we're gonna do a live, two-hour broadcast in a place like Madison Square Garden with three rings to it—like a three-ring circus—with acts in each one, and we're gonna have fifteen thousand kids screaming and yelling, and . . . there was brutal silence. At the time, I always thought silence was good—that I had stunned people—but subsequently learned it's *bad*. The first words back that Gerry ever spoke to me were, "I think I'm gonna throw up."

DEBBY BEECE: It started off awful. We struggled to get that thing going. It took many years to become good. Those first several years—*cringe*. It was such a big hurdle. We didn't have access to talent, we didn't have money. It was scary.

HERB SCANNELL: The first year there was a busload of people who wouldn't clap. They were Eastern-European deaf people. I think ALF won best actor. Say no more, right?

MICHAEL KOEGEL: The first time I worked the Kids' Choice Awards—and for *years*—it was like, "Best actor: Robin Williams, Arnold Schwarzenegger . . ." Always the same people. And they would not

return our phone calls. They were movie stars and Nick meant nothing to them. Now Will Smith hosts it, but at the first Kids' Choice Awards, the only celebrity we got in the theater to accept an award was Charles Fleischer, the voice of Roger Rabbit. And we had to confirm he'd win an award, because he wouldn't come to lose.

DEBBY BEECE: It *was* a good idea. We just didn't have any resources to really do it. But that never stopped us before . . .

ALBIE HECHT: I wanted the award itself to be something that would differentiate ourselves. Something people can actually use, that's a toy. Scott Webb and his creative folks took that and came up with different ideas. One of them was a kaleidoscope, originally without the blimp. That was not substantial enough, so then we did the blimp with the kaleidoscope *embedded* in it. The blimp was one of the most popular of Nickelodeon's logos, so that's why we went with it. Those first couple of years, we had 250 to 300 people. Maybe 500, tops. The breakout year was when we got Whitney Houston, who was just at the apex of her career. I think it was 1995.

HERB SCANNELL: Jeffrey Katzenberg started DreamWorks Animation, and we both had a common enemy in Disney. He delivered Mel Gibson from *Chicken Run* via helicopter at the Kids' Choice Awards in 2001. From that point on, it was a matter of, "Who do you want to get? Jim Carrey? Tom Cruise?"

ALBIE HECHT: Before the Internet, the polling for the Awards was done at a park or chain like McDonald's. There was always a great deal of promotion, marketing, and sponsorship around it.

MIKE KLINGHOFFER: Gerry had had a very conservative attitude as far as merchandising and licensing Nickelodeon products. It really was very important to her, to consider what she used to call "parent trust." That we would not try to force kids to dress like Nickelodeon characters and eat sugar cereal.

DANA CALDERWOOD: They hadn't been corporate before. They wouldn't let advertising in. Casio asked us to put their name on the *Double Dare* clock. For a million dollars. And Nickelodeon didn't do that. They said, "We're not Disney."

MIKE KLINGHOFFER: Yes, we turned down a million-dollar offer with Casio on the *Double Dare* clock.

SCOTT WEBB: I had more than one discussion with lots of business departments within Nickelodeon who were like, "Listen, I have a $100,000 deal on the line. Is it really important that the logo's

orange? It can't be black-and-white for Pizza Hut?" Or, "Can we do it differently because we're dealing with Kodak?" That's what I was up against.

VANESSA COFFEY: We wanted to put out high-quality things that represented the shows. The concept behind the original Nicktoons block was we were making original programming and the kids would tell us when they wanted the toys—instead of the other way around. *Rugrats* was our first big licensing success. It didn't happen until we started syndicating it during the week. Then the toy deals started coming along with the licensing. It was a slow process, but it was a big success.

LINDA SIMENSKY: Nick was *always* happy to license. There was *You Can't Do That on Television* soap back in the early years.

GERRY LAYBOURNE: Just as the advertising world had been skeptical about the cable TV world, licensing was slow to come to Nick. We were difficult; we did not want to sell kids short or out. We didn't like putting logos on things. We wanted to be doing something creative and new. We had many heart-wrenching conversations: Most of our shows didn't have a shot at licensing, like *Salute Your Shorts*, because it was a short-lived series. Even if you look at what's merchandised from Nick now, it's only a few of their shows that are everywhere. It's the nature of the merchandising world: being risk-averse.

MARK MOTHERSBAUGH: Growing up on Andy Warhol and Marshall McLuhan and things like that, to me it was endless pleasure. I love the idea of going into a drugstore and seeing *Rugrats* toothpaste or going into Burger King and seeing frozen chicken nuggets in the shape of *Rugrats* characters. And I think that, if anything, *Rugrats* had all sorts of early information for how to make an art form spread across different marketplaces, different presentations.

WENDY LITWACK: When you're on Nickelodeon and it's cable, the advertising dollars are not as intense. When you take something and now Wendy's kids' meals are sponsoring it, they get input and tell the network what to do and don't do. *Doug* suffered when it changed to Disney because of network intervention.

JIM JINKINS: Disney bought ABC, created "One Saturday Morning," and began to court my company, Jumbo Pictures. So, should I stay with Nickelodeon, who is through with me . . . or get bought by Disney, where we get to create sixty-five new half hours of *Doug*, a feature-length movie, *Doug Live!* for their theme park, toys, books, additional funding for development and production on many new series . . . ? To

quote a famous movie line, *They made an offer we couldn't refuse*.

CONNIE SHULMAN: Hands down, I prefer the old *Doug*! The new *Doug* just wasn't the same. Hard to put into words. Perhaps not having Jim around as much and Tom McHugh—definitely awesome, but having to readjust to a new Doug—and I missed all the gang crammed in the studio, waiting for their turn for the big group scene. Someone just dimmed the magic a bit.

JIM JINKINS: I will confess that I took my eyes off *Doug* too much during those Disney days once I got overwhelmed with all my responsibilities. The Nicktoons *Doug* stories were the most autobiographical, and I was the most hands-on with their creation.

DAVID CAMPBELL: At Nick, we had been making handmade jalopies that were fun and broken-down and had to be fixed, but were interesting. Disney makes Lexuses. Once the quirky, little creative company gets put into the System, its edges get rounded out and things get smoothed over in all kinds of ways. If you like bumpy, beautiful vehicles that are harder to drive and they do things that surprise you, then you're not gonna like the Lexuses—they're too sleek and smooth. I think that's why kids tend to like the Nickelodeon episodes better, because they're quirkier. But you get old and your joints get creaky; my friend runs a Lexus dealership, so I own a Lexus now. But I still remember my jeep fondly . . .

JIM JINKINS: I mostly agree with *Doug* fans who think the original 104 eleven-minute *Doug* stories made for Nick were the best. Except for "The Dark Quail Saga," written by Joe Fallon for Disney's *Doug*.

BILLY WEST: This was when Disney was going to mimic Nick. And if they couldn't do it, they would buy it one piece at a time.

MELISSA JOAN HART: I had such a blast on *Sabrina, the Teenage Witch* at Disney. They were the best years of my life, but I wasn't very proud of the character. She was sort of wishy-washy and whiny, and it wasn't as much fun to play her. I wouldn't be friends with Sabrina, but I would be friends with Clarissa.

JOE O'CONNOR: I liked Melissa much more on *Clarissa* than I did on *Sabrina*.

MITCHELL KRIEGMAN: I was really circumvented on the pilot for *Clarissa Now*. I *wanted* to make a prime-time show out of *Clarissa*, let her grow up, have boyfriends . . . but the network executives said to me, "Well, network audiences don't like any of that 'postmodern shit.'" They didn't like the talking to the camera and the fantasies. As if network

audiences were different than cable audiences.

CHUCK VINSON: For a network like CBS to realize, "Hey, Nickelodeon and Melissa . . . something's happening here! Let's try to do something!" you know that comes from years of bringing that show up to standards where people could talk about it like that.

MITCHELL KRIEGMAN: We also tried to do an album. The group was Clarissa and the Straitjackets, and it was called *This Is What Na-Na Means*.

RACHEL SWEET: The record company didn't really know what they wanted to do with it, and honestly, it was just an afterthought after the show was almost done, so . . .

MITCHELL KRIEGMAN: It was "too good," and Sony Wonder determined it would be impossible to market the thing as a kids' album. So they slashed up the original Straitjackets album, made it much shorter, and added in a bunch of silly audio noises and quotes. I took my name off the project.

BOB MITTENTHAL: We got lucky the first time out of the box with *Double Dare*. It gave them a lot of misplaced confidence that we would always be so lucky.

HARVEY: They did a lot of other game shows to try to re-create lightning in a bottle, which everybody does: Once something happens, you try to duplicate it. And quadruple it, and quintuple it . . .

ABBY HAGYARD: There are a number of people I have met over the years who say, "We're going to do a show kind of like *You Can't Do That on Television*!" Every time I hear that, I say, "Good luck!" You really have to put a lot of ingredients together to make something look that effortless.

MARC SUMMERS: They did a show called *Finders Keepers*. Major disaster. Wrong host, wrong concept. *GUTS* might have come close, and *Legends of the Hidden Temple* to a certain extent . . .

ROBIN RUSSO: Marc and I went on to do another show called *What Would You Do?* Which I called *Why Are We Doing This?*

BOB MITTENTHAL: *Super Sloppy Double Dare* was the same show, just marketed differently. *Double Dare 2000* was when they brought it back after it went away for a while. They made a lot of money on that idea for a good number of years—none of which went to the creators.

THOMAS MINTON: Like Cartoon Network, Nick seems to have been adrift

for some time now. The last bona fide hit they've had—for over a decade—is *SpongeBob SquarePants*, and it was sort of done under the radar, going against everything Nick then considered an animated series to be. Once it hit, however, every studio in town wanted "our *SpongeBob*" in the manner they wanted "our *Ren & Stimpy*" a few years earlier. Imitation breeds garbage!

GEORGE EVELYN: *SpongeBob* is a success because everybody likes it. Whether that happened because of some Nicktoons process or not, who can say? Although . . . it *did* happen at Nickelodeon.

WILL MCROBB: When John got a chance to do everything he wanted to do on the Spike version of *Ren & Stimpy*, it failed because people don't want to see something that just goes way beyond the boundaries. They want something that has some dimension or humanity to it.

BILL WRAY: He didn't have to go straight to fucking homosexuals and buggering each other. Save it up! Imply it! Work with it! That vile, ugly thing is totally self-destructive. A way to say "fuck it" forever. When Microsoft gave him a big pile of money for a cartoon, he called it "Weekend Pussy Hunt." Are you kidding me? Artistic freedom is one thing, but they're not going to want that. They want *Ren & Stimpy*.

ALBIE HECHT: I *fought* to make *Snow Day*, which is essentially a *Pete & Pete* movie based on that whole idea of magic realism that Chris and Will do so well.

WILL MCROBB: If you look at that movie, you can see a *Pete & Pete* template: Little girl, older brother having sibling issues about not wanting the other one to grow up, and they kind of come together . . .

CHRIS VISCARDI: We've tried many times over the years to create something with a *Pete & Pete* sensibility, but ultimately it would not move forward. People don't want anything that's quirky anymore. Quirky means odd. Odd means weird. Weird means not for everybody. Not for everybody means lower ratings. Lower ratings means, *We don't make as much money. Uh . . . we can't do that*. And that's just the way it is.

WILL MCROBB: We had a lot more material that made *Snow Day* a lot more *Pete & Pete*, but eventually it got cut out. If it could've been more like the show, I would've been more proud of it.

ALBIE HECHT: It was a really successful movie for us.

D.J. MACHALE: I did write a *Dark* movie called *The Tale of the Wicked Gift* for Paramount. It was an original story of the Boogie Man who was conjured centuries before by an ancient tribe as a means to discipline

children. But the spirit grew in power until his only purpose became terrifying children, capturing their souls, and banishing them to a frightening land that exists in an ancient silver box . . . that our characters find in Sardo's Magic Mansion. The project never went anywhere because the folks who ran Paramount at the time didn't get that you could make a movie like that, meaning "horror lite." They felt that horror had to be either true horror or *Scooby-Doo* funny. It's too bad; I went back and read that script recently and it's really good!

MITCHELL KRIEGMAN: The shows that came after are supposed to be aspirational, but the characters are really just aspiring to be show business stars, which is about the least functional, least useful thing in the world. *American Idol* and *Hannah Montana* are fine, but being a scientist or a journalist or a painter or being *anything* is more important. Clarissa was *smart*. She wasn't trying to be a "star." Being a star for Clarissa would have been a *step down*. She admired Madonna . . . but she also admired scientists. She was more cool than the characters from these other shows.

ALAN GOODMAN: Fred and I were the first ones to leave under our own steam and to be available to the rest of the television industry. So we had development deals *everywhere*. When we were talking to CBS about a Saturday morning show, they had all kinds of rules about what kids could understand, about how kids' minds work, about the kinds of things we could do in animation. We thought these guys were just idiots.

DEBBY BEECE: In 1989, I left to launch a comedy channel called Ha!

MIKE KLINGHOFFER: I left Nickelodeon in 1991, which is when Viacom was forming their comedy network called Ha!, which actually merged with the Comedy Channel and became Comedy Central, which I will take credit for naming. I truly stole it from Sears Brand Central.

LINDA SIMENSKY: I left for Cartoon Network. When that started up, I thought it was really cool. I like to have as much freedom as possible. I enjoyed my time at Nick, but after nine years, I was ready for the next thing.

GEOFFREY DARBY: I was working with Nick for ten years, which is a long time to be working in any phase of TV. I needed to break away from working with children. I felt if I didn't show a range, I would quickly get labeled as a person who just does "kids." And I thought I had more to offer than that. That took me to Viacom Interactive, and they dragged me back into kids by having me invent Noggin. Then I went to CBS to do *CBS Eye on People*, which was subsequently sold to

Discovery. Then they bought Travel Channel and merged with them. And then I went to do women's at Oxygen. I was at the Weather Channel and then Martha Stewart. From children's to Martha Stewart. You have to take the intervening eighteen years of TV experience there.

ELIZABETH HESS: As an actor, as much as we love steady gigs, there is something about the unknown that feeds the creative spirit, and I was really hungry to go back out into the unknown. I loved everyone that was a part of *Clarissa*. I stayed in touch somewhat with some, but it's a peripatetic life that we actors lead. If I were to see anyone from that show, it would be as though no time at all had passed. But my life has moved on and so have other people's.

DANNY TAMBERELLI: I speak to everyone that I've worked with along the way for the most part. Kenan I give guitar lessons to, because he's on *SNL* and we're both in the city. I see him a coupla times a month.

ALISON FANELLI: I cried hysterically when I left the last wrap party. I hugged Michael, and we were *really* crying. I knew I wouldn't see him again; my life was going in a *completely* different direction. Danny and Michael are still very close, which is great.

DANNY TAMBERELLI: Mike lives in Greenpoint, so he's in Brooklyn. We hang out once in a while; we can't really hang out in bars because he gets weird. It's been known to happen a few times.

FRED KELLER: *Hey Dude* matured as the kids matured, and the material got better as the writers got more adept at it. We thought we'd be stuck out in the desert, and at the end, we were sorry to go. But life goes on and careers move forward.

COURTNEY CONTE: *Salute Your Shorts* was great training for me, because we were scrappy—there were no rules, we made it up as we went along, and we just went for it.

GRAHAM YOST: When *Hey Dude* wrapped, I was out of a job and recently married. I was miffed that Nick hadn't offered me any kind of development deal. I ran the show for a year and wrote thirteen episodes! There was no phone call. I was having lunch with a friend and said I had this idea about a bomb on a bus. He said, "That's a good idea. You should write that."

ROSS HULL: I'm a meteorologist now, so it wasn't like I stopped after the show. *Are You Afraid of the Dark?* certainly provided a sort of launching pad for me.

DAVE COULIER: *Out of Control* was like comedy college for me. Bob

Hughes was extremely generous with letting me exercise comedic freedom. So I learned a lot about delivery, timing, and being funny on camera. By the time I got to *Full House*, I was well armed.

FRED KELLER: This was my first experience doing episodic TV, and it was a wonderful training ground. After that, I went on to do two hundred episodes of network TV. Not bad for something I almost turned down.

VENUS DEMILO: I played intramural football when I was in college, which I probably wouldn't have done had it not been for that character. I didn't go into professional sports, but it's still part of my life. Being part of *Salute Your Shorts* did make me realize I love being on set. I studied film production in college so I could make my own projects.

RICK GALLOWAY: By season four, I had already asked Bob Mittenthal to AD or at least a way I could find an understanding of production in which they put me through a battery of very fun jobs, kinda assisting people. I ended up after *Welcome Freshmen* working at Nickelodeon as a PA and being involved in production, which I am now. I'm a lighting director.

DAVID LASCHER: I'm about to write and direct a film, and *Hey Dude* definitely put me on that path.

CHRISTINE MCGLADE: What I took away was a very good understanding of how broadcasting works, behind the scenes. I had many opportunities to do that kind of work as the years went by and ended up doing some producing with Roger and Geoff. That was hugely helpful as my career continued down that path.

ABBY HAGYARD: Some amazing things happened to the kids who went through that process. Some of them look back on it and roll their eyes, smile a funny smile. But they all came out of it with a very clear sense of who they were. I would be stunned if there was anybody who said they didn't like it.

JUSTIN CAMMY: My wife certainly didn't recognize me later in life, but when she found out when we were dating that I was *the* Justin from the show, she admitted it was the only show she watched with her brother and sister. Even though they were separated by quite a bit in age, they could watch it together.

ROBIN RUSSO: I married my husband after the *Double Dare* craze, and he wasn't that into the arena of television—it was like, "Oh, okay. Some *Double Dare* thing that my wife did." Then he realized how huge a

thing it was and now is kind of proud of me.

CHRISTINE TAYLOR: My husband, Ben Stiller, kept hearing people coming up to me saying, "I loved that show and grew up watching you! I loved Melody!" Paris Hilton came up to me at some place in LA and went crazy because she was such a big *Hey Dude* fan. This was before Paris Hilton was Paris Hilton, so I didn't even know who she was. Someone had to tell me. And Ben would say, "I have to see this." They hadn't put the show on DVD yet, so when Ben was working on a movie at Paramount or something, as a gift he got somebody at Nickelodeon to burn the full series for me and made a case and everything. Our daughter didn't even recognize me when she watched it. Ben has since pulled some scenes and clips to use against me. He does little home movies and he'll sometimes throw some scenes from *Hey Dude* on. Just to make me laugh.

ALISON FANELLI: My husband now, he never heard of the show before I told him about it. We were dating for months before he found out. *Do you even know who you're dating?*

KATHERINE DIECKMANN: We never even really knew people watched it. Now it's really fascinating to see how many people were influenced by it when they were kids.

JAMES BETHEA: It's fascinating because at the time, you're managing this campaign, trying to keep the thing running as best you can, and you're hoping that people like it, but you're not really thinking about the long-term effects at all. To go online today and see people in their twenties now or older discussing the impact of what we did? That's amazing. I've met people who told me they went into technology and production because of what they saw on *Nick Arcade* as a kid.

MELISSA JOAN HART: People definitely started talking to me about it and how it changed their lives. I heard people say they became journalists because of *Clarissa*.

TOM NIKOSEY: Mr. Wizard was the original. Even Bill Nye was at his funeral and paid homage to him. Bill said Don was "the one that influenced all of us." When Don spoke at the National Science Teachers Association at the annual meeting in Anaheim '06, the Myth Busters were there performing, and when they got up, they announced Don was in the audience. Six hundred people all stood up and gave him a five-minute applause. The Myth Busters admitted he influenced everyone. Who could dispute that? He was America's favorite science teacher.

ARON TAGER: My character came out of the script relentless. My favorite

line was, *I want your theater! And I'm going to* have *it!* I used it in a demo for myself, and my agent got freaked out, so he stopped using it —'cause it was too scary. One of the assistant stage managers on a play I was doing in Toronto came up to me and said that when I was Dr. Vink, I scared the *shit* outta her as a little girl! "That's wonderful!" I said. "You don't seem to be any worse for the wear."

MITCHELL KRIEGMAN: My favorite thing is that to this day, everywhere I go to pitch a movie or a TV show or a book, there's always someone twenty-four to thirty there. These are the people who are starting to run the world. As soon as they hear I created *Clarissa*, they go crazy and revert to being fourteen-year-olds. Even some of the guys.

BOB MITTENTHAL: I was working on a film and these PAs came over and said, "We heard you worked on *Double Dare*!" They just fell on their knees: "Thank you! You *made* my childhood!" And that's pretty gratifying. So I have no shame about it at all. Maybe I should . . .

CHRIS VISCARDI: When the Internet started to really grow, we were shocked about how many people would talk about *Pete & Pete* with the passion of a rabid following, because it's been so long since the show's been off the air.

WILL MCROBB: You make something, you go into the time machine, and you come out seventeen years later to see what happens. It's pretty amazing to consider: We may have only gotten a 2.1 rating and they took us off the air, but seventeen years later, there's all these twenty-six-year-olds who are saying *Thank you so much*.

JASON ALISHARAN: Since it's been about twenty years since I was on the show, I don't get recognized in public.

CHRISTINE MCGLADE: There's a certain age group of people who still sometimes recognize me, and that's an odd experience.

ALISON FANELLI: It's been *such* a long time. I'm *really* surprised when I'm recognized. The last time it happened, I was in medical school and I was at a Starbucks with pj's and glasses on. My hair was short-short. And someone was like, "What are *you* doing here?" *How did you even notice me?* It might be harder with Michael and Danny. "Where's the tattoo?"

RICK GOMEZ: I was walking around a Kmart in Manhattan and a couple of kids were with their family chasing me around the aisle and laughing: "It's Mike!" *Wow, what is Maronna going through?*

DAVE RHODEN: Several years after the show, I was eighteen or nineteen and I was in Florida at a hotel pool with a bunch of friends. At this

age in my life, I had grown out my hair—at least chin level all the way around—and had a big, fat, thick goatee and an earring in my ear, and I had put on a lot of muscle. This little girl who was probably up on the eighth floor of the hotel balcony screams, "IT'S MERV!" And all my friends just died laughing. They were like, "Yes, it is!" And I was like, "How did this little girl from, like, eight stories away recognize me with long hair, goatee, and an earring?" I didn't even feel like I was the same person. *Seriously, you remember that?*

ANDREA LIVELY: I was never seen on *Nick Arcade*, and that's the way I wanted it to be. It was really cool that I could go out and people wouldn't know who I was. I could have a life *and* do what I did on *Nick Arcade*.

HOWARD BAKER: I was visiting New York City once and was walking down the street behind these four club kids who had homemade backpacks of the characters. They called each other "rugrats." I told them I was the director on the show and they went berserk! I was a bit overwhelmed by the attention and thought they were going to kidnap me.

CONNIE SHULMAN: It's surprising how many times when I'll say something at the grocery store or something and that twenty-year-old range will pick up on it real fast. To think, this little orange-faced blond girl was a role model for some girls that are now in their twenties.

RACHEL SWEET: The show I'm working on right now, we have a bunch of interns in their mid-twenties, and the other day one of them said, "Oh my God! You wrote the theme song to *Clarissa Explains It All*?" And then she sang it for me.

ARON TAGER: I still get phone calls every once in a while, fans of Dr. Vink. And they all give me the line, *With a v-ah vah-vah*. But it doesn't happen that often, so it's fine.

RICHARD M. DUMONT: Of course I get the catchphrase from anyone who recognizes me. That was annoying for a little bit.

KATHERINE DIECKMANN: We didn't have any sense of who we were reaching when we were making it. I've had students who saw *Pete & Pete* when they were kids, and it's really interesting to me when they're so passionate about it. It lets me see the effect of how it shaped people's sensibilities. To see all that work and that it really had meaning for people is fantastic.

MELISSA JOAN HART: There's always, at least once a day, someone who

comes up to me and basically says, "I remember you from *Clarissa*," and they feel like they're in this exclusive club. It was a cult hit, so when people say it to me, they have this little wink of their eye. It's so funny to see the reactions of people who were really moved by that show and character.

DANNY TAMBERELLI: You have to be a certain kind of person to really enjoy *Pete & Pete*. I find people who come up to me or like the show are people I would relate to or would be friends with. I don't think I've ever been approached by someone who's recognized me from *Pete & Pete* and felt kinda weird about it. Some kind of big jock dude or whatever.

RICK GOMEZ: I'll go on a set and my second AD will come up to me and say, "Endless Mike, man!" And he's *thirty*! These shows were being made for him. Now we're all working together, and that is the coolest shit. Those are the people I end up having a martini with at the end of the night.

TREVOR EYSTER: I've been a security guard on a night shift when things were tight and there were kids there who probably watched me on television. I was too embarrassed to tell them who I was.

BLAKE SENNETT: My own demon was feeling like a fraud. When I transitioned into music with Rilo Kiley, kids would sing the *Salute Your Shorts* theme song at me and yell from the audience. They would bring "Pinsky sausages" to a show, and I wouldn't know what they were doing. *Are you fucking with me?* I got off stage and cried, I was so bummed out and humiliated. I thought I'd never be taken seriously.

MEGAN BERWICK: Freshman year of high school, after *Salute Your Shorts* and a movie I did, I hadn't booked anything for about six months. I said something in my English class and one of the boys in there said, "What do *you* know? You're just a washed-up has-been." I was like, "Yeah. You're right. I am. That's exactly what I feel like. Thanks for pointing that out." Sophomore year, my history teacher was doing roll call the first day of class and she reached my name and she said, "You're that girl on that Nick show." "That's me!" "My kids love that show. I can't *stand* it!" "Okay . . ." And then she asked me for my autograph later. It's a weird dynamic.

MICHAEL BOWER: We got degraded all the time. I worked at CityWalk at a comic book store to make some money and had people come up to me and make fun of me. "Why do you work here? You're a *star*!" Boy, they take your pride and they shove it down. They make you feel like crap.

JASON ZIMBLER: If somebody was secure . . . or *insecure*—let's frame it right—and had to prove themselves, if "Ferguson" wasn't cool or they were "cooler than" or whatever that is, I had to contend with that. And I had mechanisms to contend with that. If there was a group of people there, and somebody was trying to be douchey, then I just wouldn't really pay attention to them.

BLAKE SENNETT: Later, I realized people weren't ridiculing me. They were just trying to connect: "I saw that show! I was part of that! You are part of me!"

ALASDAIR GILLIS: People will want to find affiliation—I understand things from our childhood can hold a very special impact as something you want to connect with—and the fact that it was part of people's childhood might have a sort of staying power.

VANESSA LINDORES: For some people, we were the cheeky background noise to their middle school/adolescent years. These are important years, and while those people are still around, we will be meaningful as fond memories.

JOANNA GARCIA: I was recently with my husband and two of our best friends in Orlando at Harry Potter World, and our guide on the tour took us through the whole place. As a treat for me, he brought me back to the old stages where we shot *Welcome Freshmen* and *Clarissa Explains It All*, and I got to see my old dressing room . . . and now it's totally transformed and totally different. But the moment I walked in, it smelled the same to me, which was this really great sweet smell. And it just brought me back to a really wonderful time in my life.

TREVOR EYSTER: People have asked me where *Salute Your Shorts* was shot, and I don't know because I was driven there as a kid and am estranged now from my mom. I would like somebody to tell me how to get back, so I can go hiking there. I don't even know how to get back to where my memories are, frankly.

MICHAEL MARONNA: All of us were there. It's one of those things we can come together on. A lot of people are like, "Oh, I grew up with you!" Nickelodeon is a kids' network. So it's not surprising that the kids watching would identify with us. Since we can't freeze time, all these people in their thirties, dealing with their jobs and lives now, they still remember those times. It's the chance to relive their childhood, but a little weirder. And it's immortalized on TV, so it's more reinforced.

SANDY KAVANAUGH: The first word my daughter ever read was "Nickelodeon." She pointed to it on a T-shirt and said, "Nickanee!" It's been there for her her whole life.

CHUCK VINSON: When my daughter was really young, we would put on episodes of *Clarissa Explains It All* and she would be really into it, which put a smile on my face: *Yeah, Dad directed that.*

E. G. DAILY: My kids were at that age where they were *huge Rugrats* fans. It was always on in the house. I was pretty much the coolest mom on the block. I was the "Tommy Pickles Mom." Kids would come over and say, "Do the voice! Do the voice!"

MARTY SCHIFF: I always joke with my children that they have to refer to Nick as "The Network Daddy Built."

JULENE RENEE-PRECIADO: I actually still have VHS tapes of the show, and I show them to my kids. The last season of *Roundhouse*, I was pregnant with my daughter and gave birth to her about a month and a half after the show got canceled. She's going to be eighteen this year, and we quote the show *all the time*.

ROBIN RUSSO: I have a son and daughter, and when I showed them *Double Dare* about five years ago, my daughter burst into tears because I was getting hit by a pie. And now my daughter has a teacher who was a *contestant* on *Double Dare*!

DOUG PREIS: I didn't have that to share with my kids. They missed that. They know that Dad does stuff for Vlasic Pickles and Lucky Charms, but in terms of network things and *Doug*, it's sad in a way. There are discs and stuff, but it's not the same. That was a different time.

BOB MITTENTHAL: Because I *worked* in the field of kids' TV, I knew just how stupid it could be. So I tried to keep my kids away from it. But I should show it to them, just to get a reaction out of them.

ROGER PRICE: I didn't like my own kids to watch it at the time, not because I was afraid it would corrupt them but because it sort of reminded them that their dad spent his working day having fun with other children. Or so I thought. It made me uncomfortable, anyway. My son told me only recently that he was about the only kid in school not able to talk about the show the next day. He felt quite out of it.

DEBBY BEECE: As a mother of three young children, I was always telling my kids to turn off the TV set.

JOHN CRANE: I was over at the Nick offices not too long ago, and I honestly don't think they know the show. Some of the executives, I'm not even sure they've ever seen it!

MARK SCHULTZ: The memories of working on the early shows were like campfire stories. They didn't have any relevance. I began to feel

irrelevant. It was time for me to move on.

ELIZABETH HESS: I watched the episodes of *Clarissa* once they were finished. And I think for the most part, that was it. Sometimes now my students say, "Let's have a *Clarissa* party!" And I'm like, "Nooooo! No, no. For you, it's nostalgia. For me, it's a really beautiful time in my life I don't need to revisit."

JASON ZIMBLER: Those shows, those characters, the writers were partly your teachers. Because you listened to them as closely as you listened to your middle school science teacher. And those are data points. Those are like clear harkenings. Those are the ways you can call back your twelve-year-old life by way of these shows.

SEAN O'NEAL: I went through a roller-coaster ride, I'm not going to lie. I had many ups and downs and trials and errors after *Clarissa*. It wasn't until four or five years ago that I decided to give LA a try. I wasn't really involved much in the industry after the show except for commercials and what my agent would call me for. I wasn't pursuing it. So the industry didn't pursue me. And I did go through some really tough times.

TREVOR EYSTER: I'm in back pain and can't afford a chiropractor. I'll probably lose my car any day now and am really amazed I haven't gotten a court document yet. But I'm happy, you know? I'm happy because I'm living authentically. I'm happy because I think "happy" is a choice we all make outside of our circumstances. I don't look like a geek anymore. I'm kind of a jock now, really.

JASON ZIMBLER: I did hope that the show would result in the "Ferguson" brand or the "Jason" brand, where the stock would rise. But I decided to go to college and left the business. I think I was scared, actually. When I was a kid actor, I had this perverse, overarching confidence that I was King Shit, walking into the room knowing I was better than anybody else in the audition. Somewhere on the show, I think I grew up.

DANNY COOKSEY: It's really strange: They had some *Salute Your Shorts* on around Thanksgiving or something on Nick and my daughter was watching it. And it was a weird, like, out-of-body experience. I had no recollection of the show. I was watching myself and I didn't remember the plot at all. It was very strange.

JACOB TIERNEY: It almost felt like it didn't happen because it was so quick. It's weird to see yourself in twenty-two episodes of TV you barely remember doing.

CONNIE SHULMAN: I've watched episodes of *Doug* on these bad tapes that we have, and it brings to mind the actual shooting of that particular episode, and I end up remembering really stumbling on a particular line where they've cleaned it up. It's like watching yourself and listening to yourself is a similar kind of experience. There's a little bit of that "eww" factor.

JOHN KRICFALUSI: I can't watch anything I do. All I see is the mistakes.

CHUCK SWENSON: I haven't watched *anything*. It's much better to go forward. Having done it, it's like reliving a high school football game. Who gives a fuck?

GEOFFREY DARBY: This happens every generation. People go back and find what they grew up on and they watch it again . . . and they usually find out that it wasn't anywhere near as good as they thought it was. There were some pretty lame *You Can't Do That on Television*'s mixed in there. But there were some genius ones, too.

JOE O'CONNOR: Sometimes it doesn't even have anything to do with the quality of it. It's like your cereal at that age; it just makes you comfortable.

MITCHELL KRIEGMAN: It wasn't like people had some messianic idea that they were creating history. They just really cared a lot. That's all I'm saying.

HERB SCANNELL: About five years ago when I'd left MTV Networks, I'd been invited to Boston College to speak at some sort of seminar. And a young guy who's gone on to do some brilliant stuff on the Internet was interviewing me about Nick. Afterward, he said, "You probably had more to do with me developing a sense of humor than anyone else." It was the first time I realized there was a Nickelodeon generation of kids coming of age that were going to bring to whatever they were doing professionally a sense of humor or a look at the world that was shaped in part by Nick. That felt good because I think we did a lot of good stuff at Nick.

FRED SEIBERT: Gerry was very tuned into the idea that, at ten years old, a kid could be in love with their parents one minute and run away from them the next. And she said, "Look, this is a natural thing that children do: They're both closest to their parents *and* they want to reject their parents simultaneously. It's part of the process of growing up." One of the things that would happen when the audience would inevitably reject us and become adults was they would hopefully come back with kids of their own. As long as the brand stays true to its beliefs, a generation of people raised on Nickelodeon becoming

parents will introduce *their* kids to Nickelodeon through their eyes.

GUS HAUSER: Children's programming is eternal. There's always a new group of children. And you can always give the new age group the old programs. I would even bet they're doing some of that today!

FRED SEIBERT: During Gerry's years, we were also really clear on the fact that at various development stages, we were just going to lose kids entirely . . . and that was built into the fabric of the business. They would lose interest the same way that at eleven years old I lost interest in cartoons because the Beatles came out. *You know, you gotta grow up, right?*

DOMINIC LUCERO: ***Reprise the theme song and roll the credits!***

THE NINETIES? THE NINE TEES? NINE–GERK! NINETIES INDEED.
I remember them perfectly.
For I am Artie, the Strongest Man in the World.
A squirrelypop time of tinny musics and little Vikings!
Sansational pipe all around.
Pipe! Not a wasted moment.
Puny kids unbridled by book or job or stove, nuts-going, bomb-popping,
and stupidly perfectly messily of mouthy and shirt and brainbag,
flew around like magnificent hollerbirds through the wilds of everywhere:
slayers of the bored and dumb and the mad and the mortgaged and the adult.
Little pirates full of Plork and Fume! Fuuuume! Heavy syrup! Heavy!
A blessed time enpillowed. Much ravaging then of the jackcrackered
Americans for me and the Petes and handsome Ellen and the rest of them;
eating handfuls of sledsnow and sunburn by day
and moonwhiff and bugwink by night.
Concocting the most elaborate plans and then wrassling a forest!
Wonder chunks! Heart bleats!
Unstoppable Pipe! You were with us.
We all ran past them all and made life a huge, flopping thing
with our wits and our goof and each other.
It was quiet then. But tasty and large. A colossal carnival pie!
A lollipop hundred years ago.
It's too kind and soft and fragile to sift through now,
lest it shatter like butterfly wings that blowfloat into a smiley girl's smile
face like chalk dust. Ack stew.
But now there's a book of it all?! How dare you? A book of time?

Of that time?!
Our time! Pewsus! I'll book you, bookie! Befouler of kids' memory holes!
That was our time!
Not a fan of this book.
Only a fan of you and me. Of our time. For it was US and THEM, and we were US.
And US was all that mattered.
Pipe on bookwormy, pipe on.
Pipily,

—ARTIE,
The Strongest Man in the World (aka Toby Huss)

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It has long been remarkable to me that someone with a mouth and mind like mine, born of a youthful diet of classic Nickelodeon and—at far too young an age—everything from Stanley Kubrick to Paul Verhoeven (thanks, Dad) as well as a nasty propensity for always telling the truth (thanks, Mom) has ended up with so many life-saving true-blue friends.

To put it simply, this book would not have been possible had the following individuals not selflessly donated food, lodgings, stimulants, entertainment/art, support, advice, and good cheer over the course of its quixotic development and production:

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In delving deeply into this process, I discovered quickly that the provenance of Nickelodeon is far more complex than I originally anticipated. There are innumerable additional stories that could have been told, including those by interviewees represented in this book. However, the following people were either omitted for structural reasons or could not be interviewed through no fault of their own: Jeff Weber, Mike Reiss, Dustin Diamond, Mayim Bialik, Mark Osborne, Alison Maclean, Jack Shih, Cliff Johnson, Carole Hay, Doug Compton, Richard Edson, Ray Fabi, Merle Kessler, Raymie Muzquiz, Jack Riley, Jill Wakewood, Nancy Bay, Rand MacIvor, Kit and Sam Laybourne, Max Bond, Bill Prickett (big helper, sorry!), Ivan Dudynsky, Bill Plympton, Daniel DeSanto, Chris Graves, Patrick Mallek, Natalie Nucci, Alexa Junge, Mark David, Jim Smith, Tom Hill, Joseph Piasek, Kristian Truelsen, Duncan Gillis, John Dilworth, Brodie Osome, Del De Montreux, Woody Fraser, and Robert Dollwet. Hopefully, their stories will end up in later printings of this book or in ancillary publications.

And *finally* (thanks for humoring me here), I want to give the stage to the husky eleven-year-old who was jumping up and down inside of me every time I spoke with one of his many contributing heroes here. Objectivity be damned: Getting to speak with John Kricfalusi was one of the coolest fucking things I got to do on this project, and I want to thank him for making a frothing fanboy's dream come true in that regard, as well as for supplying my favorite answer to the tens of thousands of questions I asked throughout the course of this maddening ballyhoo:

ME: Would you ever want to meet someone who grew up on *Ren & Stimpy*?

JOHN K.: Dumb question.

I'm sure I've left out tons of people here and probably made at least a few mistakes in the book itself. Send any such complaints—along with whiny remonstrations wondering why I didn't talk to a particular person no one cares about from a show no one remembers except for you—to HeySmileyStrange@gmail.com.

Facebook.com/NickOralHistory

Twitter.com/NickOralHistory

CHARLIE ADLER was a voice director on *Rugrats* during the later run of the series after Paul Germain left. Add. Credits Incl.: *All Grown Up*, *Rocket Power*, and *The Wild Thornberrys*.

JOEY AHLBUM is an animator and artist who created some of Nick's iconic interstitial/promotional materials, such as his contemporized dinosaurs singing doo-wop and wearing sneakers. His show *Thunder Lizards*, based loosely on these early designs, was nearly picked up as a first-wave Nicktoon.

JASON ALISHARAN played Midnight Society member Frank in *Are You Afraid of the Dark?*

ED ALTON created the music for *Salute Your Shorts*. Add. Credits Incl.: *Head of the Class*, *Whitney*, and *Suddenly Susan*.

JOE ANSOLABEHERE was a writer on *Rugrats* who helped run the show during its first sixty-five episodes with Paul Germain. Add. Credits Incl.: *Pound Puppies*, *Recess*, and *Hey Arnold!*

KIRK BAILY played camp counselor Kevin "Ug" Lee on *Salute Your Shorts*.

HOWARD BAKER was both a director on *Rugrats* and the Overseas Animation Director on *The Ren & Stimpy Show*. Add. Credits Incl.: *Aeon Flux*.

JIM BALLANTINE was an associate producer on *The Ren & Stimpy Show* who was brought in by Nickelodeon to assist with difficulties the network felt existed within the show's original production. He became a producer once the show was turned over to Games under Bob Camp's administration.

ANDY BAMBERGER was Nickelodeon Employee #5, becoming Director of Production and in charge of the On-Air Promotions Department. He stayed on as an integral component of Nickelodeon's development throughout the network's production of original programming and the opening of Nickelodeon Studios Florida.

TIM BARTELL was the Manager of Scenic Services in the art department of Nickelodeon Studios Florida. He oversaw the construction of various sets on such shows as *Double Dare*, *GUTS*, and *Legends of the Hidden Temple*.

CRAIG BARTLETT was a story editor on *Rugrats* who would go on to create *Hey Arnold!* with fellow *Rugrats* writer Steve Viksten. He developed the characters of Reptar and Angelica's poker-faced doll, Cynthia.

JERRY BECK is a world-renowned animatophile who's written books on such topics as *Looney Tunes*, *The Flintstones*, and Nicktoons. From 1993 to 1997, he was the Vice President of Animation for Nick Movies, working on such films as *The Rugrats Movie* and *Harriet the Spy*.

DEBBY BEECE came into Nickelodeon as Sandy Kavanaugh's personal secretary, making her the nascent network's third employee. She would stay on at Nick as Director of On-Air Promotions to help develop the channel and usher in Nick's "Us vs. Them" philosophy.

MICHAEL BELL was the voice of Drew Pickles, Charles "Chaz" Finster, and Boris Kropotkin, among others on *Rugrats*. Add. Credits Incl.: *Transformers* and *G.I. Joe*.

MEGAN BERWICK played ZZ Ziff on *Salute Your Shorts*.

JAMES BETHEA cocreated *Nick Arcade* with Karim Miteff.

JOHN BINKLEY created *Fifteen*, Nickelodeon's first and only soap opera, which starred a budding Ryan Reynolds.

BOB BLACK was a writer on *You Can't Do That on Television*.

MICHAEL BOWER played Eddie "Donkeylips" Gelfen on *Salute Your Shorts*. Add. Credits Incl.: *The Wonder Years* and *Dude, Where's My Car?*

KELLY BROWN played Bradley "Brad" Taylor on *Hey Dude*.

JANIE BRYANT was a costume designer on *The Adventures of Pete & Pete*. Add. Credits Incl.: *Deadwood* and *Mad Men*.

DANA CALDERWOOD was a director on *Double Dare*. Add. Credits Incl.: *Where in the World Is Carmen Sandiego?* and *Late Night with Conan O'Brien*.

JUSTIN CAMMY was a cast member on *You Can't Do That on Television*.

BOB CAMP helped to develop *The Ren & Stimpy Show* before becoming a writer, director, and artist on the series. He eventually led the production when the series was taken away from creator John Kricfalusi and his Spumco studio by Nickelodeon. Add. Credits Incl.: *The Real Ghostbusters* and *Tiny Toon Adventures*.

DAVID CAMPBELL is Jim Jinkins's longtime production partner who executive-produced *Doug* and worked with Melanie Grisanti and Jim

on establishing Jumbo Pictures.

MELANIE CHARTOFF was the voice of Didi Pickles and Grandma Minka Kropotkin on *Rugrats*. Add. Credits Incl.: *Parker Lewis Can't Lose* and *Fridays*.

CHERYL CHASE was the voice of Angelica Pickles on *Rugrats*. She also performed various voices on *The Ren & Stimpy Show*, being the secretary of show creator John Kricfalusi at his Spumco studio.

PETER CHUNG directed the pilot for and opening sequence to *Rugrats* before leaving the series to create *Aeon Flux*. He is considered to be one of the most innovative artists working in the field of animation, having pioneered new perspectives and camera movements that had never before been hand-drawn. Add. Credits Incl.: *Diablo* (video game series).

VANESSA COFFEY was the Vice President of Animation at Nickelodeon and is credited with having been the guiding force behind the creation of the original Nicktoons. She has worked on numerous animated series in the past and is considered the person who devised the eleven-minute cartoon segment, which became the industry standard.

SARAH CONDON was a producer on *Clarissa Explains It All*. Add. Credits Incl.: *Bored to Death*.

COURTNEY CONTE produced *Salute Your Shorts*. Add. Credits Incl.: *Roseanne*, *Grace Under Fire*, and *That '70s Show*.

DANNY COOKSEY played Bobby Budnick on *Salute Your Shorts*. Add. Credits Incl.: *Diff'rent Strokes*, *Terminator 2*, *The Ren & Stimpy Show*, Montana Max on *Tiny Toon Adventures*, and Brad Buttowski on *Kick Buttowski*. He also performs music and voices "Crackle" in the "Snap, Crackle, Pop" Rice Krispies commercials.

DAVE COULIER was the host of *Out of Control*. He also voiced the show's animated segments. Add. Credits Incl.: *Full House*, *Muppet Babies*, *The Real Ghostbusters*, and *The New America's Funniest People*.

JOHN CRANE was a cast member on *Roundhouse* who regularly played the role of "Dad" in his iconic motorized chair. He was the only cast member who was also a writer on the series. Add. Credits Incl.: *MADtv*.

GABOR CSUPO was a creator of *Rugrats* who, along with ex-wife Arlene Klasky, founded and ran animation studio Klasky-Csupo, which was also responsible for animating *The Simpsons*, music videos, and title sequences for such shows as *In Living Color*. Add. Credits Incl.:

Aaahh!!! Real Monsters, *The Wild Thornberrys*, *Rocket Power*, and *Duckman*.

E. G. DAILY (aka Elizabeth Daily) was the voice of Tommy Pickles on *Rugrats*. She is also a musical recording artist. Add. Credits Incl.: *Happy Feet*, *Babe: Pig in the City*, *The Powerpuff Girls*, *Valley Girl*, and Dottie in *Pee-wee's Big Adventure*.

CHRISTINE DANZO was a producer on *The Ren & Stimpy Show*.

GEOFFREY DARBY was one of the most essential personnel at Nickelodeon, having developed *You Can't Do That on Television* with Roger Price—something that brought him to Nickelodeon as a producer, show developer, and finally President of Production. As second-in-command, he was in many ways the "father" to head of network Gerry Laybourne's "mother."

SHAWN DAYWALT-LUTZ was a cast member on *Roundhouse* who typically played "Mom" in sketches.

VENUS DEMILO played Telly Radford on *Salute Your Shorts*. Add. Credits Incl.: *Ghost World*, *Family Matters*, and *Sister, Sister*.

KATHERINE DIECKMANN cocreated *The Adventures of Pete & Pete* with Chris Viscardi and Will McRobb. She wrote and directed a number of the episodes, along with directing all of the sixty-second interstitials. She brought the "Downtown New York"/proto-hipster style to the show and continues her work in the realm of indie cinema while teaching at Columbia University. Her music video credits include the likes of REM's "Stand" and "Shiny Happy People."

RICHARD M. DUMONT played Sardo—no "Mr." and accent on the "Doh"—owner of the Magic Mansion on *Are You Afraid of the Dark?* Add. Credits Incl.: *Assassin's Creed*, *Splinter Cell*, and *Prince of Persia* (all video game series).

MICKI DURAN was a dancer and the youngest cast member on *Roundhouse.* She would frequently play the "airhead" character.

CHARLES S. DUTTON guest-starred in the two-part *Are You Afraid of the Dark?* special "The Tale of Cutter's Treasure" as Captain Jonas Cutter. Add. Credits Incl.: *Roc*, *Alien 3*, and *Rudy*.

TONY EASTMAN was a supervising director on *Doug*. He is also an illustrator of children's books, and his father, Phil Eastman, created such beloved children's classics as *Are You My Mother?* and *Go Dog. Go!* Add. Credits Incl.: *Beavis and Butt-Head*, *Daria*, and *Saturday Night Live*.

DAVID ELLIS was the in-house art director at Nickelodeon for fifteen years and worked on such shows as *Nick Arcade*, *Clarissa Explains It All*, *My Brother and Me*, *What Would You Do?*, and *Kenan and Kel*.

GEORGE EVELYN was an animator and art director at Colossal Pictures, which created many of the early animated IDs and promos for Nickelodeon. He created the animated pilot *Big Beast Quintet* for the original Nicktoons, but it was not picked up as a series.

TREVOR EYSTER (aka Tim Eyster) played Eugene "Sponge" Harris on *Salute Your Shorts*.

ALISON FANELLI acted on *The Adventures of Pete & Pete* as Ellen Hickle, who was *not* Big Pete's "girlfriend," but rather a girl who was his friend. Allegedly . . .

JEFF FISHER performed the theme song to *Are You Afraid of the Dark?* and alternated composing episode scores with Ray Fabi. Add. Credits Incl.: *Madeline* (TV specials).

EDDIE FITZGERALD was a layout artist on *The Ren & Stimpy Show* and contributed in a variety of other ways, as did most staff on the series. In addition to having worked on a litany of other series in the past (as well as teaching numerous future prominent animation producers while they were students at CalArts), he was a model for the character of "Pinky" on *Animaniacs* and *Pinky and the Brain*.

MIKE FONTANELLI headed up character layout on *The Ren & Stimpy Show*. Add. Credits Incl.: *The Simpsons* and *Tiny Toon Adventures*.

RICK GALLOWAY played Walter Patterson on *Welcome Freshmen*.

JOANNA GARCIA played Midnight Society member Sam on *Are You Afraid of the Dark?* Add. Credits Incl.: *Clarissa Explains It All*, *Freaks and Geeks*, *Reba*, and *Gossip Girl*.

JANEANE GAROFALO guest-starred on *The Adventures of Pete & Pete* as English teacher Ms. Brackett in episode "X = WHY?" She is a well-known stand-up comedienne. Add. Credits Incl.: *Saturday Night Live* (series regular), *The Ben Stiller Show*, *The Truth About Cats and Dogs*, *Reality Bites*, *Wet Hot American Summer*, and *24*.

JESSICA GAYNES was a cohost on *Wild & Crazy Kids* who replaced Annette Lesure when she left the series.

PAUL GERMAIN was, along with Gabor Csupo and Arlene Klasky, one of the original creators of *Rugrats* who "ran the show" in its first sixty-five-episode run. Add. Credits Incl.: *Recess* (creator).

ALASDAIR GILLIS was a cast member on *You Can't Do That on Television*.

JIM GOMEZ, as with the majority of artists at *The Ren & Stimpy Show*, "did a little bit of everything": directing, storyboard and layout art, design. But he was "primarily a writer" on the show. He was one of the small group of people with John Kricfalusi in the earliest days of the show's original development.

RICK GOMEZ played "Endless" Mike Hellstrom on *The Adventures of Pete & Pete*. Add. Credits Incl.: *Justified*, *Sin City*, and *Band of Brothers*.

OMAR GOODING was a cohost on *Wild & Crazy Kids*. He is the brother of film star Cuba Gooding Jr. Add. Credits Incl.: *Hangin' with Mr. Cooper*, *Smart Guy*, and *Baby Boy*.

ALAN GOODMAN worked with Fred Seibert and their company Fred/Alan to rebrand Nickelodeon in the early eighties. He was a writer on such shows as *Hey Dude* and *Clarissa Explains It All* and later created *The Mystery Files of Shelby Woo*. Along with Seibert, Goodman is responsible for the iconic MTV logo/animation.

BRUCE GOWERS was the main director on *Roundhouse*. Add. Credits Incl.: "Bohemian Rhapsody" (music video) and *American Idol*.

JUDY GRAFE played Mom (aka Joyce Wrigley) on *The Adventures of Pete & Pete*.

SEYMOUR GREEN was a dancer and cast member on *Roundhouse*.

MELANIE GRISANTI was the producer on *Doug* and helped to establish its production company, Jumbo Pictures, with Jim Jinkins and David Campbell.

ABBY HAGYARD played Mom and the Librarian, along with the other "grown-up" female characters, on *You Can't Do That on Television*.

DENIS HANNIGAN created the music for *Rugrats* along with Mark Mothersbaugh. Add. Credits Incl.: *Adventures in Wonderland*, *CatDog*, and *Recess*.

MARY HARRINGTON was the Supervising Producer of Animation at Nickelodeon who worked with Vanessa Coffey and Linda Simensky in establishing Nicktoons.

MELISSA JOAN HART played eponymous Clarissa Darling on *Clarissa Explains It All*. Add. Credits Incl.: *Sabrina, the Teenage Witch*.

HARVEY (aka John Harvey) was the announcer on *Double Dare* and its

subsequent incarnations. Add. Credits Incl.: *Trading Spaces*.

GUS HAUSER is considered the "Father of Nickelodeon." His extensive background in international law, business affairs, and telephony made him uniquely qualified to help guide WASEC into creating the Movie Channel, MTV, and Nickelodeon. These pioneering efforts, which opened the doors for cable television and the Information Highway, would later make it both practical and viable for future generations to establish the Information Superhighway.

ALBIE HECHT took on many roles overseeing Nickelodeon's development, including creating the Kids' Choice Awards and producing and developing such programs as *GUTS*, *Clarissa Explains It All*, and *All That*. After a stint as Head of Live-Action Production, he became President of Film and TV Entertainment, developing such projects as *Snow Day* and *The Rugrats* franchise along with building Nick's Los Angeles animation studio.

ELIZABETH HESS was Mom (aka Janet Darling) on *Clarissa Explains It All*. She works in independent film and theater, teaching on the latter subject at NYU.

BENNY HESTER cocreated *Roundhouse* with wife Rita Hester and comedy writer Buddy Sheffield. He was the music director of the show and has enjoyed a long career in music.

RITA HESTER cocreated *Roundhouse* with ex-husband Buddy Sheffield and husband Benny Hester. She also directed many of the episodes along with Bruce Gowers and has worked extensively in children's theater.

BOB HUGHES worked with Bob Klein and his company, Klein &, to create Nickelodeon's first branding and promotional concept, known as "the silver ball." Soon after, Hughes created early Nick series *Out of Control*.

ROSS HULL played Gary on *Are You Afraid of the Dark?* After a string of various other roles, he became a meteorologist for Canada's CTV. Without his trademark glasses.

TOBY HUSS created and played the part of Artie, the Strongest Man in the World on *The Adventures of Pete & Pete*. Add. Credits Incl.: Kahn Souphanousinphone on *King of the Hill*.

JOHN INWOOD took over as cinematographer on *The Adventures of Pete & Pete* after Michael Spiller left the series. He shot many of Katherine Dieckmann's music videos, such as REM's "Shiny Happy People," along with music videos for other directors. Add. Credits Incl.: *Scrubs*

and *Parks and Recreation*.

BOB JAQUES was the Animation Director on *The Ren & Stimpy Show* who also worked as an animator on the pilot, "Big House Blues." His Carbunkle Cartoons studio was a significant contributor to the "animation renaissance" that took place during the late eighties/early nineties.

DONNIE JEFFCOAT was a cohost on *Wild & Crazy Kids*.

JIM JINKINS created *Doug* and established Jumbo Pictures to do so. He initially worked as a puppeteer on "pre-Nick" show *Pinwheel* and on early Nick show *Hocus Focus*. He later developed such series as *PB&J Otter* and *Pinky Dinky Doo*. He now runs Cartoon Pizza with longtime production partner David Campbell.

DAVID JOHANSEN guest-starred in *The Adventures of Pete & Pete* episode "On Golden Pete" as Park Ranger Thorsen. He was a key figure of the New York punk scene, fronting seminal punk band the New York Dolls and later performing under the pseudonym Buster Poindexter. Add. Credits Incl.: *Scrooged*.

EDD KALEHOFF is a master game show music creator, having composed themes for such Nick shows as *Double Dare*, *Make the Grade*, and *Finders Keepers*. Add. Credits Incl.: *The Price Is Right*, *Family Feud*, *Concentration*, and *Monday Night Football*.

YVETTE KAPLAN was an animator on the pilot for *Doug* before becoming an animation director on the series. Add. Credits Incl.: *Beavis and Butt-Head*, *King of the Hill*, and *Futurama*.

SANDY KAVANAUGH developed pre-Nick show *Pinwheel* before becoming the network's first Director of Programming. She hired Gerry Laybourne before leaving the network in 1983.

FRED KELLER was one of two directors on *Hey Dude* who alternated episodes with Ross Bagwell Jr. (deceased). Add. Credits Incl.: *24*, *New York Undercover*, and *The Pretender*.

BOB KLEIN ran Klein &, the company that gave Nickelodeon its first brand identity, known as "the silver ball" campaign. He executive-produced early Nick shows *Wild Rides* and *Out of Control*.

MIKE KLINGHOFFER began on pre-Nick show *Pinwheel* as an associate director and stayed on the network throughout the years to become Vice President of Production, working in the On-Air Promotions Department as well as producing and developing a number of shows, including *Double Dare*, *Finders Keepers*, *Think Fast!*, and *Don't Just Sit*

There. He later helped develop Comedy Central.

MICHAEL KOEGEL was the assistant to in-house casting director Rich Ross, with whom he cast the majority of live-action series at Nick during this period, including *Hey Dude*, *Clarissa Explains It All*, *The Adventures of Pete & Pete*, and *Salute Your Shorts*.

JOHN KRICFALUSI (aka John K.) created *The Ren & Stimpy Show*. Along with originally voicing Ren Höek and creating Spumco—the studio that initially produced *Ren & Stimpy*—he directed, wrote, and produced many episodes of the show before being contentiously fired by Nickelodeon. He has worked extensively in numerous cartoon series, has produced animated music videos for the likes of Björk, and is a noted animatophile who is considered by many in the field to be the greatest living artist in their industry.

MITCHELL KRIEGMAN created *Clarissa Explains It All*. In addition, he worked as the story editor on *Doug*, *Rugrats*, and *The Ren & Stimpy Show*. Though he was equally maligned and embraced by his colleagues at Nickelodeon, he greatly informed the network's aesthetic and sensibility. Add. Credits Incl.: *Saturday Night Live*, *Bear in the Big Blue House* (creator), and *Rocko's Modern Life*.

KEVIN KUBUSHESKIE was a cast member on *You Can't Do That on Television*.

DEE LADUKE began at Nickelodeon as a scheduler before working her way up into the position of Director of Programming, helping with the creation of *Double Dare* and later creating *Hey Dude*. Add. Credits Incl.: *Designing Women*.

TIM LAGASSE is an artist and puppeteer who worked on various Nick shows, such as *Allegra's Window*, and who helped develop the network's "Stick Stickley" promotional character. Add. Credits Incl.: *Chappelle's Show* and *Sesame Street*.

DAVID LASCHER played Ted McGriff on *Hey Dude*. Add. Credits Incl.: *Sabrina, the Teenage Witch*, *Blossom*, and *Clueless* (television series).

BARRY LATHER was *Roundhouse*'s wunderkind choreographer. He's worked in the past with the likes of Janet Jackson, Paula Abdul, Sting, and George Michael.

SHEILA LAWRENCE was a writer on *Roundhouse*. Add. Credits Incl.: *Mad About You*, *Desperate Housewives*, *Gilmore Girls*, and *Ugly Betty*.

GERRY LAYBOURNE *was* Nickelodeon in the minds of those who worked under her as the president of the network from 1984 to 1996.

Originally a schoolteacher who began freelancing in the early days of Nick, she was brought in as Director of Acquisitions before becoming Director of Programming and finally, after Cy Schneider resigned, President. She, perhaps more than any other person, led Nick into its golden age with an eye for innovation and, ultimately, kid-first fun. She later founded the Oxygen Network, in addition to her various other endeavors in media and humanitarianism.

LISA LEDERER was the initial costume designer on *Clarissa Explains It All*.

ANNETTE LESURE was an original cohost on *Wild & Crazy Kids*. Add. Credits Incl.: *CSI* and *House M.D.*

CRYSTAL LEWIS was a singer and cast member on *Roundhouse*. She also enjoys an award-winning career as a Christian pop/gospel singer.

VANESSA LINDORES was a cast member on *You Can't Do That on Television*.

BECCA LISH voiced Doug's sister, Judy Funnie, and friend Connie Benge along with other characters on *Doug*.

WENDY LITWACK was the casting director on *Doug* and has a long history of casting voice actors in both commercials and other series.

ANDREA LIVELY was the elusive announcer on *Nick Arcade*.

HEIDI LUCAS played Dina Alexander on *Salute Your Shorts*.

TOMMY LYNCH created *The Secret World of Alex Mack*. Add. Credits Incl.: *Kids, Inc.*

ERIK MACARTHUR played Michael Stein on *Salute Your Shorts*.

D.J. MACHALE created *Are You Afraid of the Dark?* Add. Credits Incl.: *Encyclopedia Brown*, *Pendragon* (novel series), and *Morpheus Road* (novel series).

MICHAEL MARONNA played Big Pete on *The Adventures of Pete & Pete*. Add. Credits Incl.: *Home Alone* and *Slackers*.

DAVE MARTEL played the recurring role of Teddy Forzman, Big Pete's best friend and classmate, on *The Adventures of Pete & Pete*.

BRENDA MASON took over the role of director on *You Can't Do That on Television* after Geoffrey Darby left to become involved in developing Nickelodeon.

CHRISTINE MCGLADE (aka "Moose") was perhaps the most iconic cast

member, oftentimes host, and later creative consultant on *You Can't Do That on Television*.

DIZ MCNALLY played Diz Asster on *Out of Control* and is known for her signature Fast-Told Fairy Tales and high-pitched "Diz Call."

WILL MCROBB was "the smartest guy in the room" at Nickelodeon, beginning in the On-Air Promotions Department where Chris Viscardi and he, among other things, helped to establish Nick at Nite. The duo would later create *The Adventures of Pete & Pete* along with Katherine Dieckmann before McRobb was tapped by Nick to be a story editor on *The Ren & Stimpy Show* and *Doug*. Viscardi and he continue to work together and have produced such projects as *Snow Day*.

LISA MELAMED was a writer on *Hey Dude*. Add. Credits Incl.: *Party of Five*, *Mad About You*, and *Lipstick Jungle*.

THOMAS MINTON cowrote Nick's first foray into original animation, *Christmas in Tattertown*, which was produced by Ralph Bakshi. He is a longtime friend and colleague of *The Ren & Stimpy Show* creator John Kricfalusi and was the main inspiration for "Brain" on *Animaniacs* and *Pinky and the Brain*.

KARIM MITEFF cocreated *Nick Arcade* with James Bethea.

BOB MITTENTHAL began working at Nickelodeon in the On-Air Promotions Department, where he helped to develop *Double Dare*. He later developed and created such shows as *Welcome Freshmen*.

PHIL MOORE was the host on *Nick Arcade*. Add. Credits Incl.: *Figure It Out* and *You're On!*

JOSH MORRIS was a writer on *You Can't Do That on Television*.

MARK MOTHERSBAUGH composed the music for *Rugrats* along with Denis Hannigan. He also cofounded techno-pop new wave band Devo. Add. Credits Incl.: *Pee-wee's Playhouse*, the films of Wes Anderson, and —as art teacher—*Yo Gabba Gabba!*

MARK MULCAHY wrote and performed the theme song for *The Adventures of Pete & Pete* along with his "fictional" group Polaris, which was actually an incarnation of his well-known indie rock group Miracle Legion. He also appeared essentially as himself in the episode "Hard Day's Pete" and continued to contribute music to the show under the name Polaris. His solo career has been lauded by the likes of Radiohead's Thom Yorke.

FRED NEWMAN voiced Skeeter, Mr. Dink, Porkchop, and myriad others

on *Doug*. He also created the show's music, along with Dan Sawyer, and the majority of the series' sound effects with his signature "mouth sounds." He was a host on early Nick show *Livewire*, was prominently featured in an episode of *Out of Control*, and was instrumental to the early development of the network. He now performs on *A Prairie Home Companion* and is the writer of the book *MouthSounds*.

KRISTEN NIKOSEY is the stepdaughter of Don "Mr. Wizard" Herbert and is Vice President of Mr. Wizard Studios.

TOM NIKOSEY worked for Don "Mr. Wizard" Herbert for more than thirty years. Also married to Herbert's stepdaughter, Kristen Nikosey, he runs Mr. Wizard Studios and MrWizardStudios.com.

JOE O'CONNOR played Dad (aka Marshall Darling) on *Clarissa Explains It All*. Add. Credits Incl.: *The West Wing*, *Reno 911!*, and *Mad Men*.

LARISA OLEYNIK played Alex Mack on *The Secret World of Alex Mack*. She also guest-starred as a young nurse on *The Adventures of Pete & Pete* episode "Dance Fever." Add. Credits Incl.: *10 Things I Hate About You*, *Mad Men*, and *3rd Rock from the Sun*.

RON OLIVER directed a number of episodes of *Are You Afraid of the Dark?* Add. Credits Incl.: *Goosebumps*, *Degrassi: The Next Generation*, and *The Tomorrow People*.

SEAN O'NEAL played bedroom window interloper Sam Anders on *Clarissa Explains It All*.

BOB POMANN owns and runs Pomann Sound, the audio facility where the majority of *Doug* was recorded.

DOUG PREIS was the voice of Doug's dad—Phil Funnie—as well as Bill Bluff, Chalky, and others on *Doug*. Add. Credits Incl.: *Thundercats* and *Harvey Birdman, Attorney at Law*.

ROGER PRICE created *You Can't Do That on Television*, based on his kids' TV show for Britain's Thames, *You Can't Be Serious*, and with some development by Geoffrey Darby. Both he and his show brought the "on the side of the child" philosophy to Nick, along with the green slime and "messy" aesthetic that would become network trademarks. He left the business altogether in the earliest stages of Nick's development in order to pursue a provincial life in the French countryside. Add. Credits Incl.: *The Tomorrow People* (creator).

CRAIG PRYCE was a director on *Are You Afraid of the Dark?* Add. Credits Incl.: *Goosebumps*.

RICHARD PURSEL was a writer on *The Ren & Stimpy Show* who, as with others involved in the series, worked myriad jobs, including storyboard artist, layout artist, and even assistant to show creator John Kricfalusi. Add. Credits Incl.: *SpongeBob SquarePants* and *Cow and Chicken*.

HARDY RAWLS played Dad (aka Don Wrigley) on *The Adventures of Pete & Pete*.

CHRIS RECCARDI took on a number of roles on *The Ren & Stimpy Show*, including storyboard artist, layout artist, writer, director, and also musician. Add. Credits Incl.: *Samurai Jack*, *The Powerpuff Girls*, *Tiny Toon Adventures*, and *SpongeBob SquarePants*.

ADAM REID was a cast member and later writer on *You Can't Do That on Television*.

JULENE RENEE-PRECIADO was a cast member and dancer on *Roundhouse*. Add. Credits Incl.: *Mars Needs Moms*, *Beowulf*, and *Avatar*.

DAVE RHODEN played Merv on *Welcome Freshmen*.

ROBIN RUSSO (aka Robin Marrella) originally came aboard *Double Dare* as a production assistant before joining the stage with Marc Summers and Harvey. She was also featured in *What Would You Do?* and the various iterations of *Double Dare*.

DAN SAWYER created the music for *Doug* along with Fred Newman. Add. Credits Incl.: *101 Dalmatians* and *Allegra's Window*.

HERB SCANNELL was an integral part of the "new" Nickelodeon brand, developing a variety of programming on the network as well as Nicktoons. He took over as network president after Gerry Laybourne left. During this period, he broadened Nickelodeon into the multifaceted powerhouse it is today. Among other endeavors, he later became President of BBC America.

KEN SCARBOROUGH was the head writer on *Doug* and wrote the lyrics to the song "Bangin' on a Trashcan." Add. Credits Incl.: *The Adventures of Pete & Pete, Saturday Night Live*, and *Arthur* (animated series).

MARTY SCHIFF played Hern Burferd on *Out of Control*. Add. Credits Incl.: *Dallas* and *Creepshow*.

MARK SCHULTZ was the in-house audio engineer/designer at Nick who worked in various audio capacities on nearly all of the shows in production at this time, including *Double Dare*, *Nick Arcade*, and *Clarissa Explains It All*.

FRED SEIBERT cofounded Fred/Alan with Alan Goodman. Their team led the rebranding of Nickelodeon in 1984, which resulted in the ratings going from worst to first in cable within six months. As a consultant and producer for the channel in the new millennium, he was the executive producer of such programs as *The Fairly OddParents*. Before working on Nick, he was Vice President of Creative Services at MTV Networks, where Alan Goodman and he also helped brand that channel, developing the iconic MTV logo and animation bumpers.

BLAKE SENNETT (aka Blake Soper) played Ronald Pinsky on *Salute Your Shorts* before cofounding indie rock band Rilo Kiley with fellow child actor Jenny Lewis. Add. Credits Incl.: *The Wonder Years, Boy Meets World*, *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, and *3rd Rock from the Sun*.

LISA SHAFTEL helped construct *Double Dare*'s iconic obstacle courses and physical challenges.

BUDDY SHEFFIELD cocreated *Roundhouse* with ex-wife Rita Hester and musical director Benny Hester. He was the head writer of the show, running the writing department. He has also worked extensively in live theater. Add. Credits Incl.: *In Living Color*.

HEATHER SHEFFIELD was a writer on *Roundhouse* and is the daughter of show creators Buddy Sheffield and Rita Hester.

CONNIE SHULMAN was the voice of Patti Mayonnaise on *Doug*. Add. Credits Incl.: *Sweet and Lowdown* and *Fried Green Tomatoes*.

DAVID SIDONI was a cast member on *Roundhouse*.

ALAN SILBERBERG was the head writer on *Double Dare* who would appear on the show as a slightly exaggerated version of himself, "Al Silvers." He also wrote for *Doug*, on which he penned lyrics for Beets hits "Killer Tofu," "Mo' Allowance," and "Where's My Sock?" Add. Credits Incl.: *The All New Mickey Mouse Club*.

MARJORIE SILCOFF was a cast member on *You Can't Do That on Television*.

LINDA SIMENSKY was the Manager of Animation who developed the original three Nicktoons along with Vanessa Coffey and Mary Harrington. She is also a noted animatophile. Add. Credits Incl.: *Samurai Jack*, *Home Movies*, *Johnny Bravo*, and *The Powerpuff Girls*.

STEVE SLAVKIN created *Salute Your Shorts*, loosely based on the book he wrote with cocreator Tom Hill. In addition to writing the bulk of the show, he voiced incorporeal camp director Dr. Kahn.

MIKE SPELLER played Vice Principal Elliott Lippman on *Welcome Freshmen*.

BRYAN SPICER was a director on *Salute Your Shorts*. Add. Credits Incl.: *24*, *Parker Lewis Can't Lose*, and *Eerie, Indiana*.

MICHAEL SPILLER was the original cinematographer on *The Adventures of Pete & Pete* before John Inwood took over. He also directed the iconic opening sequence with Polaris. Add. Credits Incl.: *Modern Family*, *Scrubs*, and *Ugly Betty*.

JACK SPILLUM was a supervising producer on *Doug* who was instrumental in helping to establish Jumbo Pictures, the animation studio responsible for that series.

DAVID STENSTROM played Waldo on *Out of Control*.

JOE STILLMAN was in the On-Air Promotions Department before writing for *The Adventures of Pete & Pete*. He also wrote two episodes of *Doug*. Add. Credits Incl.: *Beavis and Butt-Head*, *King of the Hill*, *Shrek*, and *Shrek 2*.

SYD STRAW had a recurring role on *The Adventures of Pete & Pete* as number-obsessed math teacher Ms. Fingerwood. A highly successful singer-songwriter who has acted in various films and television series, she was an iconic fixture of the "Downtown Manhattan" scene of the eighties.

LARRY SULKIS was the head writer on *Out of Control*. Sulkis later worked with John Carpenter, writing Carpenter's *Village of the Damned* reboot and *Ghosts of Mars*, as well as producing the memorable "commercials" in *They Live*.

MARC SUMMERS, considered the "Godfather of Nickelodeon," hosted and produced *Double Dare* as well as its various iterations. He also developed and produced a number of other shows at Nickelodeon, including *What Would You Do?*, which he hosted. He later produced and developed numerous shows for the Food Network.

RACHEL SWEET sung and wrote the theme song to *Clarissa Explains It All* along with producer Anthony Battaglia. Her widely diverse oeuvre includes an early career as a pop singer and acting in her own show—*The Sweet Life*—along with guest spots in *The Critic* and *Seinfeld*. She's also produced and written for such series as *Dharma & Greg* and *George Lopez*.

CHUCK SWENSON was the Creative Producer on *Rugrats* who helped to establish the look and tone of the show along with Gabor Csupo, Peter

Chung, and other directors.

ARON TAGER played recurring villain Dr. Vink on *Are You Afraid of the Dark?* He also performed as Zeebo the Clown in the episode "The Tale of Laughing in the Dark." In addition to having appeared in numerous television series and films, he works in theater and the fine arts.

DANNY TAMBERELLI played Little Pete on *The Adventures of Pete & Pete*. He performs with the band Jounce in addition to his comedy troupe ManBoobs Comedy. Add. Credits Incl.: *All That* and *Figure It Out*.

BYRON TAYLOR was the in-house set/production designer at Nickelodeon. His designs were used for almost every show over the years, including *Double Dare*, *Clarissa Explains It All*, *Roundhouse*, *Nick Arcade*, *GUTS,* and *Kenan & Kel*.

CHRISTINE TAYLOR played Melody Hanson on *Hey Dude*. Thereafter, she skyrocketed with such credits as Marcia Brady in *The Brady Bunch* movies and—with husband Ben Stiller—featured roles in *Zoolander*, *Dodgeball*, and *Tropic Thunder*.

KENAN THOMPSON was a cast member on *All That* who also starred in *Kenan & Kel* with Kel Mitchell, whom he played against in their film *Good Burger*. Add. Credits Incl.: *The Mighty Ducks* franchise, *Heavy Weights*, *Fat Albert*, and *Saturday Night Live* (series regular).

JACOB TIERNEY played Midnight Society member Eric on *Are You Afraid of the Dark?*

CURT TOUMANIAN programmed many of the original video games and graphics on *Nick Arcade*.

MICHELLE TRACHTENBERG played Nona Mecklenberg on *The Adventures of Pete & Pete*. Add. Credits Incl.: *Clarissa Explains It All*, *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, *Mysterious Skin*, *Harriet the Spy*, and *Eurotrip*.

STEVE VIKSTEN was a writer on *Rugrats*. He also wrote for and cocreated *Hey Arnold!* with fellow *Rugrats* writer Craig Bartlett.

CHUCK VINSON was a director on *Clarissa Explains It All*. He has a long history of directing award shows and comedy presentations for the likes of Sinbad and Steve Harvey. Add. Credits Incl.: *The Cosby Show*, *Martin*, *The Fresh Prince of Bel-Air*, and *The Mystery Files of Shelby Woo*.

NORTON VIRGIEN was a director on *Rugrats* who also directed *The Rugrats Movie*. Add. Credits Incl.: *Duckman*.

CHRIS VISCARDI worked in Nick's On-Air Promotions Department, where Will McRobb and he helped to develop Nick at Nite before the

duo cocreated *The Adventures of Pete & Pete* with Katherine Dieckmann. He wrote and produced a number of the episodes, interstitials, and specials, and later worked with Will McRobb on *Snow Day*.

DAN VITCO worked closely with Nickelodeon Senior Audio Designer Mark Schultz on the majority of series during this era, composing songs for such shows as *Nick Arcade* and *Clarissa Explains It All*, for which he devised the iconic "Sam chord."

SCOTT WEBB "bled orange." He was Nickelodeon's first creative director and worked under Debby Beece to run the On-Air Promotions Department after being brought in by Fred/Alan to help rebrand the network. He was a well-respected mentor to many Nick show creators who came out of the promo department, and possibly embodied the "kidlike" spirit of Nick better than any other network executive.

ADAM WEISSMAN began his extensive TV directing career on *Welcome Freshmen*. Add. Credits Incl.: *The Mystery Files of Shelby Woo*, *All That*, *Hannah Montana*, and *iCarly*.

BILLY WEST voiced such characters on *Doug* as Doug Funnie and Roger Klotz. He concurrently voiced Stimpy and—after show creator John Kricfalusi was fired—Ren, along with other characters, on *The Ren & Stimpy Show*. In addition to having worked on *The Howard Stern Show* and on *Futurama* as such characters as Fry, he has voiced innumerable characters over the years, including those that had originally been performed by the late Mel Blanc, to whom he is often compared as a living paragon.

BILL WRAY was involved with the earliest development of *The Ren & Stimpy Show* and later headed the background painting division during series production. As with many of the other creatives on that show, he also worked in a multitude of additional areas.

GRAHAM YOST was a writer on *Hey Dude* who would go on to become successful in both television and film with such projects as *Justified* and *Speed*.

DAMIAN YOUNG played recurring role Bus Driver Stu Benedict on *The Adventures of Pete & Pete*. Add. Credits Incl.: *Californication*.

JEFF ZAHN was the Music Supervisor on *Are You Afraid of the Dark?* who originally composed the theme song to the show, which was performed by Jeff Fisher. Add. Credits Incl.: *Arthur* (animation series).

RAYMOND ZIBACH was a background painter on *The Ren & Stimpy Show*. Add. Credits Incl.: *Rocko's Modern Life* and the *Kung Fu Panda*

franchise.

JASON ZIMBLER played Ferguson Darling on *Clarissa Explains It All*.

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Adler, Charlie, 77, 216, 263
Adventures of Pete & Pete, The, 1, 5, 6, 8, 16, 31–33, 39, 43, 47, 49, 78, 82–84, 90, 92, 106, 115, 117–19, 122–23, 139, 141, 198, 199, 227, 235–36, 243, 245, 265, 268–71, 273, 274, 277–80, 283–87
  diversity and, 146–47, 151, 152
  "King of the Road," 116
  opening sequence of, 126–28
  "Range Boy," 115
  "What We Did on Our Summer Vacation," 3
  "Yellow Fever," 192
Ahlbum, Joey, 89, 263
Alisharan, Jason, 148, 193, 243, 263
All That, 5, 207, 208, 222, 272, 285
Alton, Ed, 134, 136, 143, 263
Ansolabehere, Joe, 110, 184, 185, 194, 208–9, 211–16, 263
Are You Afraid of the Dark?, 4, 9, 34, 65, 79, 83, 116, 132, 192–93, 195, 204, 239, 263, 268–70, 273, 277, 279, 280, 285, 287
  diversity and, 147, 148, 157, 158, 163
  "The Tale of the Mystical Mirror," 78–79
  "The Tale of the Super Specs," 26, 107
  theme to, 133–34
Bagwell, Ross, Jr., 95, 274
Bagwell, Ross, Sr., 116
Baily, Kirk, 18, 25, 27, 30, 79, 189, 198, 264
Baker, Howard, 68, 110, 162, 171, 172, 215, 244, 264
Baldwin, Peter, 40
Ballantine, Jim, 170, 171, 173, 175, 177, 178, 264
Bamberger, Andy, 60, 67, 103, 125, 203, 221–23, 228, 264
Bartell, Tim, 97, 102–3, 264
Bartlett, Craig, 68, 108, 110, 132, 161, 185, 194, 213–16, 223, 264, 286
Battaglia, Anthony, 134, 284
Beck, Jerry, 224, 264–65
Beece, Debby, 37, 39, 67, 91, 95, 123, 124, 146, 229, 237, 249, 265, 286
Bell, Michael, 77, 150, 154, 155, 212, 265
Benson, Howard, 208

Berwick, Megan, 7, 10, 11, 19–21, 26, 40, 49–50, 265
Bethea, James, 79, 97–98, 103, 104, 143, 150, 164, 241, 265, 278
Binkley, John, 46, 80–81, 265
Black, Bob, 14, 15, 17–18, 36, 48–49, 54, 58, 83, 265
Blanc, Mel, 287
Blanchard, Rachel, 204
Blechman, R. O., 114
Bonet, Lisa, 44
Bower, Michael, 10, 11, 18–20, 25, 27, 39–41, 51, 74, 136–38, 189, 198, 202, 246, 265
Brisbin, Dave, 71, 74, 189
Brown, Kelly, 70, 74, 95, 96, 156, 204, 205, 265
Bryant, Janie, 118, 119, 265
Budnick, Bobby, 40–41
Buzzi, Ruth, 58
Calderwood, Dana, 69, 73, 93, 96–97, 104, 188, 196, 200, 220, 230, 265
Cammy, Justin, 3, 4, 28, 29–31, 45, 49, 53, 54, 56, 57, 59, 107, 119, 153, 154, 158, 240, 265
Camp, Bob, 70, 76, 167, 170, 173, 174, 177–81, 264, 266
Campbell, David, 152, 153, 183, 184, 186, 232–33, 266, 271
Carpenter, John, 284
Cavanaugh, Christine, 198
Chaino, 135
challenges, 167–218
Chartoff, Melanie, 32, 66–67, 76, 77, 109, 138, 154, 155, 161, 194, 209, 266
Chase, Cheryl, 162, 169, 175–76, 209, 210, 214, 266
Chung, Peter, 108–12, 216, 217, 266, 284
Clampett, Bob, 113
Clapton, Eric, 194
Clarissa Explains It All, 1, 5, 17, 32, 36–37, 43–44, 51, 64, 72, 99–101, 104–5, 121–22, 166, 185, 192, 198, 201, 221, 227, 233–34, 237, 238, 242, 245, 247–50, 266, 269–72, 274–76, 279, 280, 282, 285–87
  diversity and, 146, 157, 160
  laugh track on, 142
  theme song for, 129, 134, 244, 284
Cleghorn, Ellen, 152
Coffey, Vanessa, 69–70, 75, 81, 108, 109, 162, 168–70, 172–78, 181, 183, 186, 210–12, 219, 231, 266, 271, 283
Collins, Suzanne, 72
Condon, Sarah, 26, 38, 43, 105, 121, 135, 166, 266
Conte, Courtney, 115–17, 137, 159, 189, 190, 202–3, 239, 267
Cooksey, Danny, 5, 11, 20, 21, 40, 74, 251, 267
Corey, Tom, 88
Coulier, Dave, 239, 267
Crane, John, 23, 42, 78, 119, 153, 207, 208, 249, 267
Crosby, David, 136
Cruise, Tom, 86
Crystal, Billy, 61
Crystal, Richard, 61
Csupo, Gabor, 70, 108, 131–33, 209, 211, 212, 214–17, 267, 270, 284
Daily, E. G. (Elizabeth), 66, 214, 248, 267

Danzo, Christine, 135, 162, 176, 218, 267
Darby, Geoffrey, 11, 12, 13, 37, 38, 54–61, 66, 67, 69–71, 84, 88, 91, 94, 95, 100, 101, 107, 116, 123, 142, 154, 165, 166, 174, 178–79, 181, 187, 188, 203, 204, 209, 215, 216, 237–38, 240, 251, 267–68, 277, 280
David, Mark, 42
Daywalt-Lutz, Shawn, 22–24, 42, 206, 268
DeMilo, Venus, 11, 21, 24, 27, 42, 62, 75, 117, 136–37, 160, 239, 268
design, fashion, and technology, 87–125
Dezaki, Osamu, 108
Dieckmann, Katherine, 32, 88, 106, 115, 127, 139, 165, 241, 245, 268, 273, 278, 286
diversity, 145–66
Double Dare, xi, xii, xiii, 60–63, 77, 82, 92–97, 104, 122, 139, 187–88, 193, 195–97, 201, 203, 228, 230, 234, 235, 240, 242–43, 248–49, 264, 265, 271, 274, 275, 278, 281–85
Doug, 72, 77, 114, 168, 173, 182–87, 232–33, 251, 266, 268, 271, 273–77, 279–84, 287
  diversity and, 152–53, 158
  show opening and music on, 130, 138, 140
Douglas, Tim, 55–56
Dudynsky, ivan, 42
Dumont, Richard M., 26, 79, 245, 268
Duran, Micki, 23, 42, 268
Dutton, Charles S., 83, 116, 147, 268
Eastman, Phil, 268–69
Eastman, Tony, 114, 140, 268–69
Eastwood, Clint, 210
Ellis, David, 37, 92, 99, 101, 269
Evelyn, George, 88, 89, 235, 269
Eyster, Trevor (Tim), 7, 10, 11, 19–21, 24, 27, 136, 189, 202, 246, 247, 250, 269
Fabi, Ray, 133
Fallon, Joe, 233
Fanelli, Alison, 2, 3, 6, 8, 15, 39, 43, 46–47, 49, 74, 117, 122, 139, 141, 164–65, 192, 198, 238, 241, 243, 269
fashion, design, and technology, 87–125
Fenhagen, Jim, 93, 94
Fifteen, 265
Fisher, Jeff, 35, 133–34, 269, 287
Fitzgerald, Eddie, 70, 114, 162–63, 172, 173, 176–77, 179, 180, 217, 269
Fleischer, Charles, 229
Fontanelli, Mike, 170, 176–78, 180, 269
Galloway, Rick, 8, 21–22, 24, 48, 240, 269
Galt, John, 98–99
Garcia, JoAnna, 4, 34, 52, 63, 193, 247, 270
Garofalo, Janeane, 82–83, 270
Gaynes, Jessica, 3, 14, 151, 270
Gerbner, George, 60
Germain, Paul, 84, 110–12, 132, 133, 150, 155, 161, 184, 185, 194, 209, 211–17, 263, 270
Gibson, Mel, 230

Gifford, Chris, 72
Gillis, Alasdair, 2, 10, 13–15, 17, 24–25, 28, 29, 42, 47–48, 53, 54, 58, 149, 247, 270
Gomez, Jim, 33, 113–14, 118, 151, 243, 245, 270
Gomez, Rick, 82, 270
Gooding, Cuba, Jr., 270
Gooding, Omar, 10, 14, 24, 63, 147, 270
Goodman, Alan, 16, 29, 64, 69, 72, 74, 77, 85–86, 87, 89, 91–92, 104–5, 129–30, 147, 189, 219, 227–28, 237, 271, 282
Gowers, Bruce, 74, 104, 271, 272
Grafe, Judy, 1–2, 5, 31, 146, 271
Green, Seymour, 151, 153, 271
green slime, 39, 53–86, 100, 187–88, 219
Grisanti, Melanie, 140, 266, 271
GUTS, 95, 102–3, 234, 264, 272, 285
Hagyard, Abby, 10, 13, 28–31, 56, 64, 107, 154, 158, 159, 195, 201, 234, 240, 271
Hannigan, Denis, 131–33, 161, 271, 278
Harrington, Mary, 66, 75, 111, 172, 176–80, 184, 185, 194, 209–10, 215, 271, 283
Hart, Melissa Joan, 1, 5, 8, 11, 16–17, 35, 36, 38, 42–45, 121–22, 166, 192, 201, 233, 242, 245, 271
Harvey (John Harvey), 60, 62, 73, 77–78, 93, 94, 104, 124–25, 187, 197, 199, 201, 234, 271, 281
Hauser, Gus, 145, 252, 272
Hay, Carole, 13, 28, 36
Hecht, Albie, 57, 86, 93, 103, 206, 207, 223–25, 228–30, 235, 236, 272
Herbert, Don (Mr. Wizard), 242, 279
Hess, Elizabeth, 1, 16, 31, 32, 36, 37, 44, 64, 142, 157, 238, 249–50, 272
Hester, Benny, 81, 136, 205–8, 272, 282
Hester, Rita, 30, 80, 151, 205–8, 272, 282
Hey Arnold!, 68, 264, 286
Hey Dude, 7, 29, 70, 74, 95, 116, 141, 142, 187, 188, 204, 238–41, 265, 271, 274, 275, 278, 285, 287
  diversity and, 155–56, 163
Hill, Tom, 283
Hilton, Paris, 241
Houston, Whitney, 230
Hughes, Bob, 63–64, 239, 272
Hull, Ross, 9, 34, 122, 158, 239, 273
Huss, Toby, 16, 31, 47, 84, 122, 147, 256, 273
Inwood, John, 115, 123, 273, 283
Jackson, Michael, 205
Jaques, Bob, 169, 273
Jeffcoat, Donnie, 10, 63, 95, 151, 197–98, 273
Jinkins, Jim, 70, 114, 130, 138, 152, 158, 182, 184, 186, 232, 233, 266, 271, 273
Johansen, David, 16, 273
Johnson, Ollie, 109
Jones, James Earl, 86
Kalehoff, Edd, 131, 274

Kaplan, Yvette, 114, 274
Katzenberg, Jeffrey, 230
Kavanaugh, Sandy, 248, 265, 274
Kawajiri, Yoshiaki, 108
Keller, Fred, 11, 36, 41, 70, 95, 96, 116, 141, 156–57, 204, 238–39, 274
Kelly, Jack, 136
Klasky, Arlene, 69–70, 73, 75, 108, 194, 209–17, 267, 270
Klein, Bob, 85, 272, 274
Klinghoffer, Mike, 30, 60, 63, 67–68, 73, 81, 87, 89, 129, 139, 145, 188, 196, 199, 228, 230, 237, 274
Koch, Chris, 115
Koegel, Michael, 122, 148, 156, 157, 201, 202, 222, 225, 229, 274
Kricfalusi, John, 33–34, 70, 112–14, 134–35, 163, 167–82, 186, 203, 216–18, 235, 251, 266, 270, 275, 278, 280, 287
Kriegman, Mitchell, 11, 16–17, 32, 35–38, 44, 60, 83, 99, 100–101, 105, 112, 121, 134, 135, 164–66, 168, 183–85, 192, 194, 233, 234, 236–37, 242, 252, 275
Kubusheskie, Kevin, 9, 28, 47, 53, 54, 98, 153, 159, 190, 275
LaDuke, Dee, 29–30, 68, 155–56, 187, 220, 275
Lagasse, Tim, 76–77, 192, 202, 222, 275
Lascher, David, 41, 95, 240, 275
Lather, Barry, 80, 276
Lawrence, Sheila, 206, 276
Laybourne, Geraldine (Gerry), xii, 32, 60, 61, 67–69, 76, 80, 81, 85, 94–95, 123, 142, 145, 165–66, 168–70, 181–82, 200, 203, 215, 222–25, 228–31, 252, 268, 274, 276, 281
Lederer, Lisa, 17, 43–44, 100, 101, 105–6, 121, 165, 166, 226, 276
Lesure, Annette, 61–62, 151, 201, 270, 276
Lewis, Crystal, 23, 128, 205, 276
Lewis, Jenny, 282
Lindores, Vanessa, 2, 12, 13, 24, 28, 46, 48, 53, 57, 158, 247, 276
Liolis, Magda, 103
Lish, Becca, 77, 152, 159, 276
Litwack, Wendy, 159, 182, 200, 232, 277
Lively, Andrea, 98, 104, 120, 204–5, 244, 277
Livewire, 220, 279
Lobban, Chris, 8, 21, 48, 191
Lucas, Heidi, 2, 6, 18–21, 26, 27, 39–41, 62, 136, 277
Lucero, Dominic, 205–6, 253
Lye, Les, 13, 30–31, 154, 159, 201
Lynch, Tommy, 164, 225–26, 277
MacArthur, Erik, 35, 137, 189, 191, 277
MacHale, D.J., 4, 26, 34, 35, 65, 134, 148, 192–93, 236, 277
Maronna, Michael, 1–2, 4, 15, 16, 34, 39, 50, 74, 146, 238, 243, 248, 277
Martel, Dave, 8, 9, 118, 277
Mason, Brenda, 9–10, 13, 14, 31, 45–46, 54–56, 59, 141, 277
Maxim, 44–45
McGlade, Christine, 8, 9, 17, 29, 46, 48, 57–59, 108, 158, 201, 240, 243, 277
McHugh, Tom, 232
McLellan, Dan, 141
McNally, Diz, 82, 119, 140, 277

McRobb, Will, 32–34, 65, 84, 90, 92, 106, 118, 126–28, 164–65, 168, 171, 173, 174, 181–83, 186–88, 226, 227, 235, 236, 243, 268, 277–78, 286
Melamed, Lisa, 17, 41, 156, 163, 278
Midnight Society, 4
Miller, George, 214
Minton, Thomas, 113, 169, 176, 235, 278
Mitchell, Kel, 285
Miteff, Karim, 103, 104, 150, 164, 204–5, 265, 278
Mittenthal, Bob, 22, 56, 63, 94, 124, 157, 196, 227, 234, 235, 240, 242–43, 249, 278
Moore, Phil, 80, 120, 143, 150, 278
Morris, Josh, 14, 47, 53, 58–59, 107, 278
Morissette, Alanis, 42, 45–46, 48, 51–52
Mothersbaugh, Mark, 131–33, 231, 271, 278
Mulcahy, Mark, 126–28, 143–44, 278–79
Murphy, Joe, 70
music and sound, 126–44
Naylor, Lynne, 162
Newman, Fred, 72, 114, 130, 140–41, 158, 220, 279, 281
Nick Arcade, 95, 97–99, 103, 143, 204, 241, 244, 265, 269, 277, 278, 282, 285, 286
  diversity and, 150, 164
Nikosey, Kristen, 119, 279
Nikosey, Tom, 242, 279
Nye, Bill, 242
O'Connor, Joe, 11, 31–32, 35, 44–45, 51, 82, 100, 192, 201, 202, 233, 251, 279
Oleynik, Larisa, 2, 4, 52, 146, 164, 165, 279
Oliver, Ron, 26, 79, 107, 157, 163, 279
O'Malley, Mike, 103, 197
O'Neal, Sean, 5, 11, 35, 37, 38, 39, 42, 44, 132, 160, 191–92, 198, 250, 280
Osome, Brodie, 153
Out of Control, 82, 119, 239, 267, 272, 274, 277, 279, 281, 284
Pekar, Marty, 129
Petrie, Doug, 72
Pitt, Eugene, 129, 130
Pomann, Bob, 183, 280
Pomposello, Tom, 88, 129–30
Preis, Doug, 72, 138, 249, 280
Price, Roger, 8, 10, 12–15, 24, 25, 27–29, 36, 39, 45–49, 51–52, 54–56, 58, 59, 67, 85, 98–99, 107, 148–49, 158, 190, 201, 240, 249, 267–68, 280
Pryce, Craig, 78–79, 158, 280
Pursel, Richard, 167, 174–75, 177–78, 280
Ramone, Joey, 139
Rated K, 228
Rawls, Hardy, 16, 31, 224, 280
Raymond, James, 136
Reccardi, Chris, 113, 114, 134–35, 162, 169, 171, 173, 175, 180, 217, 280–81
Reid, Adam, 6, 10, 12–15, 28, 29, 42, 45, 106–7, 148–49, 159–60, 281
Ren & Stimpy Show, The, 34, 60, 75, 83, 112, 113, 167–82, 186, 217–18, 235, 264, 266, 267, 269, 270, 273, 275, 278, 280–81, 287
  diversity and, 162

"Man's Best Friend," 167–69, 217
"Space Madness," 174
"Stimpy's Invention," 173, 174
Renee-Preciado, Julene, 42, 136, 206, 248, 281
Reynolds, Ryan, 265
Rhoden, Dave, 7–9, 11–12, 21–22, 42, 48, 120, 190, 191, 243–44, 281
Riley, Jack, 161
Rintaro, 108
Robbins, Brian, 222
Rocko's Modern Life, 70, 183
Ross, Rich, 201, 274
Ross, Robyn, 46
Roundhouse, 22, 72, 74, 102, 104, 136, 142, 205–8, 248, 267, 268, 271, 272, 276, 281–83
diversity and, 151, 153, 160
opening sequence of, 128
Rowe, Robbie, 208
Ruddy, Lisa, 28
Rugrats, 66, 68, 73, 75, 77, 81, 109–12, 173, 194, 208–17, 224, 231, 248, 263, 264–67, 270, 275, 284, 286
diversity and, 150, 154–55, 161
music for, 131–33, 271, 278
"Naked Tommy," 78
Rugrats in Paris, 210
Russo, Robin (Robin Marrella), 60–62, 82, 149, 198–200, 203–4, 234, 240, 248–49, 281
Salute Your Shorts, 2, 19, 66, 74, 115–17, 142, 189–91, 227, 231, 239, 246, 247, 251, 264, 265, 267, 268, 269, 274, 277, 282, 283
diversity and, 160
music for, 134, 143, 263
Sarandon, Susan, 210
Sawyer, Dan, 87, 130, 138, 279, 281
Scannell, Herb, 2, 67, 123–24, 125, 164, 166, 182, 206–8, 216, 217, 223–25, 228–30, 252, 281
Scarborough, Ken, 75, 186–87, 281
Schiff, Marty, 82, 248, 281
Schultz, Mark, 75, 101, 103, 141–43, 191, 207, 222, 249, 282, 286
Secret World of Alex Mack, The, 164–65, 277, 279
Seibert, Fred, 32, 69, 70, 88, 91–92, 144, 148, 172, 228, 252–53, 271, 282
Sennett, Blake (Blake Soper), 6, 22, 24, 42, 74–75, 190, 246, 247, 282
Setter, Jill, 21–22
Shaftel, Lisa, 97, 282
Sheffield, Buddy, 22, 23, 102, 142, 206–8, 272, 282
Sheffield, Heather, 65, 72, 163, 206, 282
Shulman, Connie, 138, 152–53, 159, 232, 244, 251, 282
Sidoni, David, 23, 42, 160, 205, 283
Silberberg, Alan, 61, 63, 77, 94, 139, 184, 283
Silcoff, Marjorie, 13, 14, 17, 27, 30, 48, 56, 59, 154, 283
Simensky, Linda, 70, 108, 112, 147, 172, 181, 212, 215, 231, 237, 271, 283
Slavkin, Steve, 18–19, 25, 27, 35, 50, 65–66, 117, 134, 142, 202, 283
slime, 39, 53–86, 100, 187–88, 219

Smith, Jim, 134–35, 167
Snow Day, 235–36, 272, 278, 286
sound and music, 126–44
Speller, Mike, 30, 283
Spicer, Bryan, 114–17, 283
Spielberg, Steven, 124
Spiller, Michael, 83–84, 115–16, 128, 273, 283
Spillum, Jack, 182, 283
SpongeBob SquarePants, 139, 218, 219, 235, 280
Stalling, Carl, 130
Steiner, Jocelyn, 8, 21, 120
Stenstrom, David, 226, 284
Stiller, Ben, 241, 285
Stillman, Joe, 32, 34, 90–92, 106, 152, 284
Straw, Syd, 139, 146, 284
Sulkis, Larry, 87, 226, 284
Summers, Marc, xi–xiii, 60–61, 73, 81, 122, 188, 195–200, 220, 234, 281, 284
Sweet, Rachel, 129, 134, 135, 165, 234, 244, 284
Swenson, Chuck, 75, 109–10, 132, 150, 162, 209, 212, 251, 284
Tager, Aron, 25, 195, 242, 245, 285
Tale of the Wicked Gift, The, 236
Tamberelli, Danny, 1, 5, 7, 16, 24, 32, 42–43, 49, 83–84, 227, 238, 243, 245, 285
Taylor, Byron, 88, 92–94, 97, 99–103, 123, 124, 187–88, 193, 195–96, 221, 285
Taylor, Christine, 1, 7, 11, 17, 36, 41, 71, 95, 96, 241, 285
technology, design, and fashion, 87–125
Thomas, Frank, 109
Thompson, Hunter S., 118
Thompson, Kenan, 19–20, 50–51, 61, 187, 190, 238, 285
Tierney, Jacob, 4–5, 204, 251, 285
Torres, Joe, 17, 95, 156
Toumanian, Curt, 99, 285
Trachtenberg, Michelle, 16, 42–43, 83, 118, 147, 199, 285–86
Viksten, Steve, 68, 73, 150, 151, 161, 208–11, 213–17, 264, 286
Vinson, Chuck, 31–32, 36, 37, 43, 44, 64, 105, 157, 160, 233, 248, 286
Virgien, Norton, 68, 78, 109, 286
Viscardi, Chris, 32, 65, 67, 89–90, 92, 123, 126, 127, 164–65, 226, 236, 243, 268, 277–78, 286
Vitco, Dan, 131, 143, 286
Walsh, Marty, 136
Webb, Scott, 39, 54, 59, 67, 68, 88–91, 145, 220, 222, 229–31, 286
Weissman, Adam, 3–4, 51, 190–91, 219–21, 227, 287
Welcome Freshmen, 21, 30, 51, 220, 240, 247, 269, 278, 281, 283, 287
  diversity and, 157
West, Billy, 76, 138, 168, 179, 182–83, 233, 287
Wild & Crazy Kids, 3, 61, 63, 95, 197–98, 270, 273, 276
  diversity and, 151
Williams, John, 132
Wray, Bill, 33, 113, 167, 177, 179, 217, 235, 287
Yost, Graham, 71, 74, 96, 189, 239, 287
You Can't Do That on Television, 3, 6, 8, 12, 17, 51, 59, 61, 67, 85, 98, 106–7,

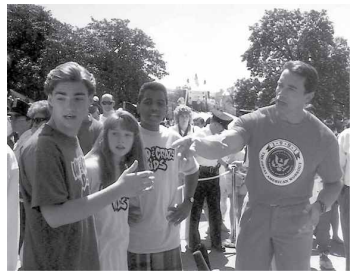
119, 187, 228, 231, 234, 251, 265, 267–68, 270, 271, 275–78, 280, 281, 283
diversity and, 147, 148, 153, 154, 158
laugh track on, 141
Young, Damian, 78, 152, 201, 287
Zahn, Jeff, 132–34, 287
Zibach, Raymond, 113, 181, 287
Zimbler, Jason, 1, 3, 8, 50, 72, 146, 151, 160, 191, 246–47, 250, 287

Being a cast member on *You Can't Do That on Television* meant "being yourself," learning your lines while still doing your homework, and making sure to take your slimings and waterings like a pro.

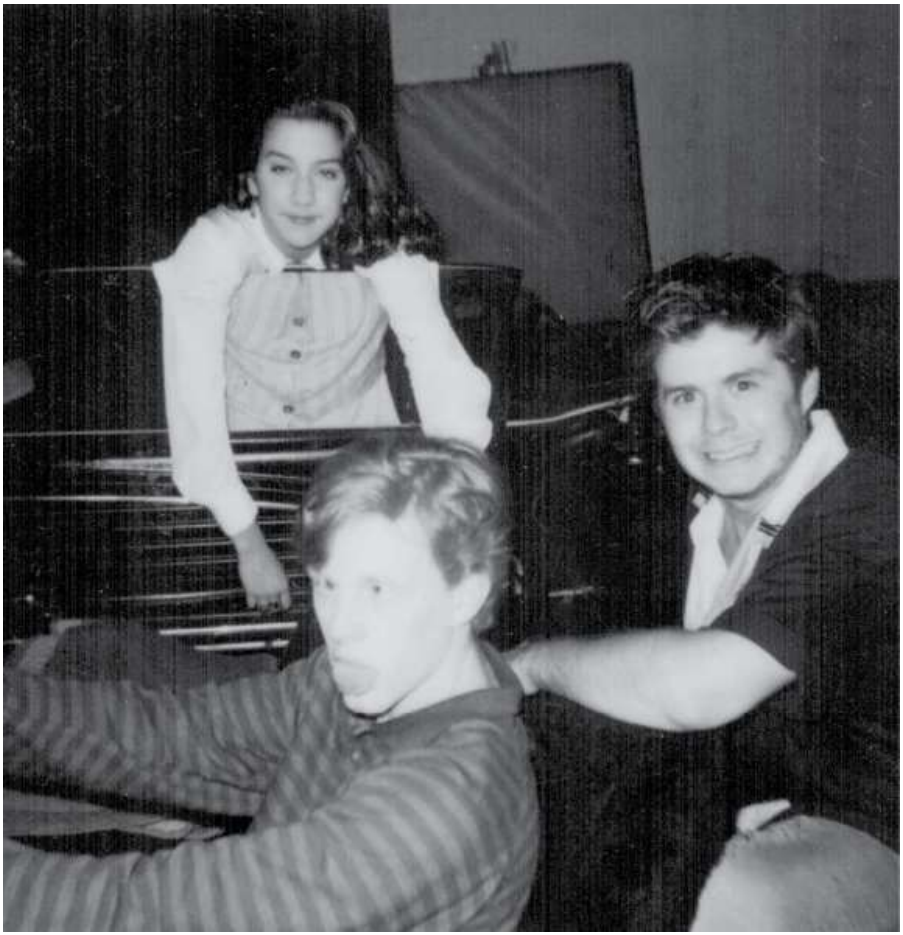
Eighties icon Diz McNally on the set of the early Nick show *Out of Control*. Besides creating the character Diz Aster, she is known for her signature Fast-Told Fairy Tales and high-pitched "Diz Call." The show would last only one season, but would be "run to death" in reruns by Nick for the next decade, according to show creator Bob Hughes.

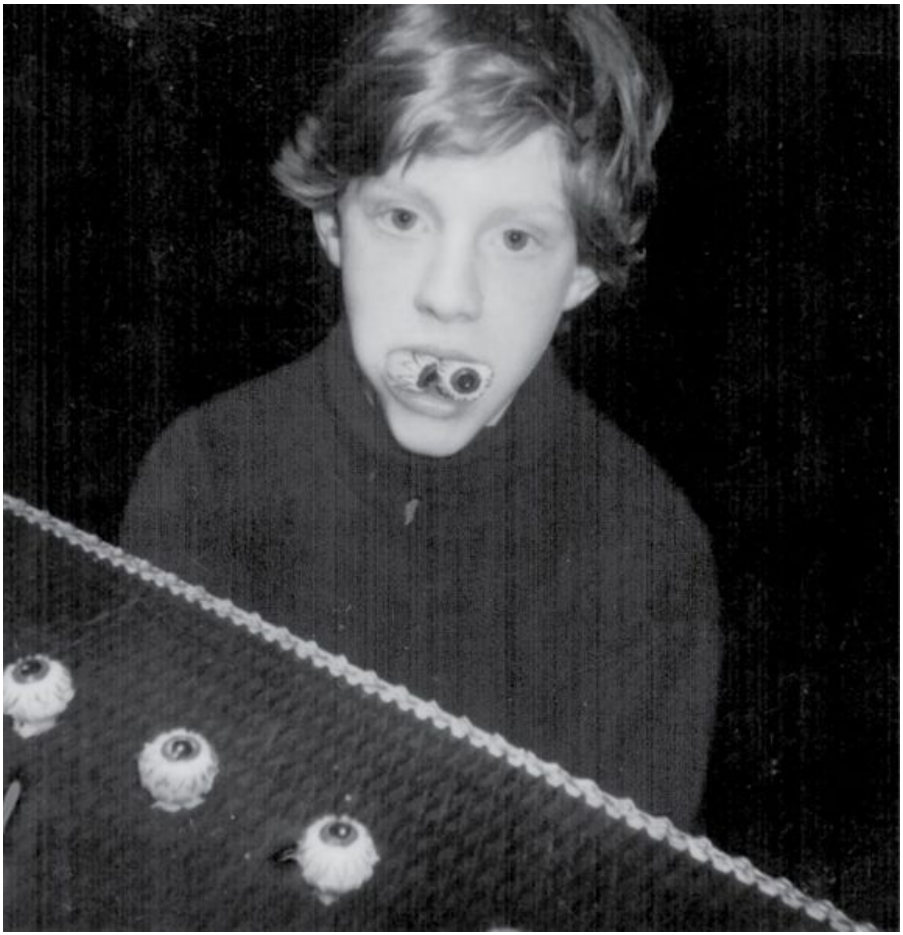
***Roundhouse* cocreator and director Rita Hester with choreographer Barry Lather.**

A model representation of an early version of the *Double Dare* set. “I’ve never heard so many kids swear in my life,” Nickelodeon president Gerry Laybourne said of the audience reaction during the shooting of the first-ever episode.



Wild & Crazy Kids **hosts Donnie Jeffcoat, Jessica Gaynes, and Omar Gooding at the White House with Arnold Schwarzenegger in 1991.**





Rick "Endless Mike" Gomez, Alison "Ellen" Fanelli, and Michael "Big Pete" Maronna fool around behind the scenes of *The Adventures of Pete & Pete*.

Marc Summers holds daughter Meredith alongside Nickelodeon “daddy” Geoffrey Darby in 1987.

Dave Rhoden, who played brainy Merv on *Welcome Freshmen*, with studio mate Melissa Joan Hart from *Clarissa Explains It All*. Rhoden says that though he was intimidated on the one or two platonic dates the young actors went on, Hart was shier than he would have thought.

Are You Afraid of the Dark? **creator D.J. MacHale (*right*) gives actor Christopher Heyerdahl a bite of his own medicine behind the scenes of episode "The Tale of the Midnight Madness."**

Some liked him, some loved him. Some hated him, some wanted to kill him. But there's no doubt that *Clarissa Explains It All* show creator and Nicktoons story editor Mitchell Kriegman was an integral member of the classic Nick team. Pictured here alongside *Clarissa* star Melissa Joan Hart.

The cast and crew of *Salute Your Shorts*.

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